



12/25/2009

### **Leg lamp stands ground in Nanticoke home**

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Mark Moran / The Citizens' Voice Jim Bartuska has a leg lamp glowing in the center of his Christmas decor inside his Nanticoke home. Bartuska, who has another lamp in his furniture store, is a big fan of the holiday classic 'A Christmas Story.'

If you're flipping through channels today, you'll likely come across it: the iconic leg lamp from "A Christmas Story," which plays continually on TBS through this evening. Those passing by Jim Bartuska's home in Nanticoke see it all the time. The "major award" featured in the 1983 classic film has been part of Bartuska's Christmas display for the past 10 years at his West Main Street home. It's perched on the ledge of his picture window in front of his Christmas tree.

Bartuska admits the lamp, adorned with a stiletto heel, fishnet stocking and silk shade, doesn't exactly fit his Victorian home.

"Everything else is pretty much traditional. It probably couldn't be more out of place,"

Bartuska said. "But that's why I like it so much. It's perfect."

Bartuska, co-owner of Bartuska's Furniture on East Main Street in Nanticoke, also has a leg lamp on display in the front window of the furniture store. Curious shoppers often ask where they could get one, thinking they're on sale. He points them to where he bought his, eBay.

He declined to say how much he paid on the online auction site, but an Internet search indicates they sell for about \$150 each.

"You can't believe how many people stop by the store and want to buy one. But I doubt I could sell that many for the price," Bartuska said.

The mystique behind the leg lamp is evidenced by the amount of passersby over the years who have been intrigued, knocked on his door, and asked where he bought it, Bartuska said.

"I had no idea what to expect. I was like, 'Why are these people at my door at nighttime?'" Bartuska recalled.

"Everybody seems to enjoy the novelty and oddity of it. As the film gains in notoriety, it's more popular."

Bartuska said he is a big fan of "A Christmas Story." He has a DVD collection and even some figurines from the film.

"It was kind of off-beat and I enjoy that kind of humor," he said. "The movie struck a chord. At this point, I could pretty much quote the lines from the movie."

The leg lamp was introduced as one of the most notable subplots in "A Christmas Story," a fictional story of a family's Christmas holiday in the 1940s. Mr. Parker won a newspaper trivia contest, and cherished the fact he won a "major award." Then, one day, the large crate arrived, stamped with the word FRAGILE, pronounced "Fra-gee-lay" by Mr. Parker. Upon opening the crate, Mr. Parker relished his prize and placed the leg lamp in his front window for his neighbors to see. "It's a major award. I won it," he tells neighbors.

The lamp and the phrase have been part of American Christmas lore ever since.

Bartuska said the leg lamp will continue to be a tradition in his holiday display.

"Originally, it was to see what people's reactions were. Now, it's just out for fun each year."

12/20/2009

### **Volunteers help Nanticoke with fire truck**

**City's 6 volunteer fire companies each are contributing \$5K a year.**

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Volunteers are vital to any fire department as extra manpower is always welcomed when battling blazes. Nanticoke's six volunteer fire companies also showed how valuable they can be in the financial department.

In the middle of 2008 the city's 1977 Hahn fire engine broke and became too expensive to repair. This left the city vulnerable, Bohan said at the time.

The city borrowed two fire trucks from two different communities, Hanover Township and Milton, over the past 18 months until its new 2009 4-wheel drive fire truck mini-pumper engine arrived earlier this month from Carbon County. Realizing the city's limited finances, the city's six volunteer fire departments combined resources to provide the

majority of the funding to purchase the \$230,000 apparatus. Each fire department will give \$5,000 a year for a total of \$30,000 per year for four years to help pay for the unit, Bohan said.

The volunteer departments are using the money they receive annually from their state grants.

“We had members of each company on a committee, and we decided what we wanted to do with it. It is not everything everybody wanted it to be, but it was what we could afford,” Bohan said.

The financially distressed city will contribute \$7,000 a year over a period of seven years in the lease-to-own agreement to purchase the vehicle. The city will own the vehicle after it is paid off.

The truck has six color-coded water hoses that will save firefighters valuable time when they arrive on the scene.

It also has more storage space, holds 400 gallons of water, a deck gun, and a 1,250-gallon per minute pump.

Sherry Long, a Times Leader staff writer, may be reached at 829-7159.

12/18/2009

### **Nanticoke says goodbye to Bushko**

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Council on Wednesday approved the final reading of the 2010 budget with no property tax increases as Mayor John Bushko presided over his last council meeting.

The \$3.94 million spending plan includes no change in the earned income tax rate, and there will no commuter tax assessed for 2010. Property tax millage remains at 1.45.

Council members praised Bushko for his dedication to the city. He has served as mayor for four years and as a council member for 16 years previously.

“I think one of the saddest things is a lot of the projects that are going to come to fruition in the next couple of years really came together under your leadership, your guidance. I really hope when these roads are taken care of, the downtown is redeveloped and Nanticoke has a new shine to it, I hope people do remember that John Bushko played a big role,” council member James Litchkofski said.

Incoming mayor, now council member, Joe Dougherty announced the city will be accepting letters from people interested in filling his seat on council. People must turn in the letters by Jan. 15.

Dougherty will take the oath of office as the city’s newest mayor at a special meeting at 10 a.m. Jan. 4.

Wednesday’s meeting was also the last for council member Brent Makarczyk, who has served one term of four years. Makarczyk was commended for being the city’s liaison during the contract negotiations with the police and fire departments.

In other matters, city engineer Daryl Pawlush updated the council on various projects being completed.

The paving of streets in town, including East Noble and East Church, are complete. Paving of East Ridge Street will be done in the spring, but the handicap-accessible ramps have been finished.

Pawlush anticipated the city would have a hectic year in 2010 as the downtown streetscape project moves forward.

Council members learned the city paid back its \$300,000 tax anticipation note that was taken out earlier this year to help with cash flow issues. Officials originally planned to take out another \$300,000 loan for 2010, but after reviewing city finances they determined they needed to borrow only \$250,000.

The city will borrow the money from Manufacturers and Trust Trading Co. at an interest rate of 4.5 percent.

“As we get closer to year’s end, we know more and more certainly what our expenses may be,” fiscal manager Pamela Heard said.

City Administrator Holly Quinn said the fact that the city needs to borrow less is a positive sign that the city is back on the road to financial recovery.

The city was declared a financially distressed city under Act 47 by the state in 2006.

12/17/2009

### **New faces, no new taxes greet Nanticoke next year**

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City residents won't see a tax increase in 2010, but will see some new faces on the city council and in the mayor's seat. Council approved the final reading of the \$3,958,223 budget for 2010, which keeps the real estate tax rate remains at 1.4573 mills. A mill is \$1 for every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Council also set the earned income tax rate at 2 percent for residents, 5 percent of which goes to Greater Nanticoke Area School District. The city can seek court approval to collect the EIT at a higher rate than average since Nanticoke was

declared financially distressed.

The city dropped a 0.33 percent earned income tax for non-residents, which has been in place since May 2007. City officials thanked outgoing council member Brent Makarczyk and outgoing Mayor John Bushko for their service. Makarczyk, who did not run for re-election, will be replaced by Margaret Haydock in January. Current councilman and incoming Mayor Joe Dougherty presented Bushko with a gavel commemorating his years of service to the city.

Bushko thanked all those he has worked with while serving the city for the past 20 years.

"I'm riding off into the sunset, but I'll be around," he said.

Council will appoint a replacement for Dougherty once he assumes his position as mayor. Those interested in the position can send letters of interest to Dougherty's attention at Nanticoke city hall by Jan.15.

In other matters, the city is applying for a gaming grant in conjunction with Luzerne County Community College for improvements to the LCCC Health Sciences Center. Officials are also applying for a gaming grant in conjunction with Hanover Township and LCCC to fund K-9 programs.

12/14/2009

**LCCC's culinary arts center on track for fall semester**

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Technologically enhanced kitchen labs, a television studio and even a chocolate room will sweeten instruction for students at Luzerne County Community College's new Culinary Arts Center.

Construction is getting under way on the 22,000 square-foot building, which is being developed by Scranton-based Mark Construction Services at the corner of Market and Main streets in downtown Nanticoke. When the center is complete, LCCC will purchase it for \$3.1 million.

It's on track to be finished and turned over to the college by Aug. 15, and the culinary arts department plans to be ready to move in just in time for the fall semester, says Dr. Gary Mrozinski, LCCC's dean of business and technologies.

"Our plan is to start next school year in our facility," he said. "So far, everything's been on schedule."

Although there will only be two weeks until the start of the semester, moving shouldn't take long: the older equipment from the existing facility will be left behind, according to Mrozinski.

The latest culinary equipment to furnish the new state-of-the-art building is being purchased through a bond issue. The center will have three kitchen labs instead of two, and one of them will have individual work stations, Mrozinski said. In that lab, a video camera will capture what the teacher is doing while the students watch on a flat-screen monitor so they won't even have to leave their workstation, he said.

The pastry arts department will have its own chocolate room, a cooler environment for storing and preparing chocolates and making desserts, Mrozinski said.

On the first floor, there will be a 75-seat auditorium with theater seating and a demonstration kitchen on the stage, a mini-TV studio with built-in cameras, a lighting grid for the stage and a control room.

"That will give us opportunities for collaboration between the broadcasting department and the culinary arts department," Mrozinski noted. "We can have broadcasting students filming something we're doing in there."

There will be a small dining room on the second floor where students will be able to learn the service aspect of the hospitality industry, he said. And there are going to be four classrooms, one of which will be a computer lab so students don't have to go to the LCCC campus.

"Because it is going to be separated from our main campus, we had to really think about what our culinary students will need in this building," Mrozinski said.

It was designed by the Scranton firm of Scott Douglas Allen, SDA Architects, which will also be the construction manager.

"We've had a very close working relationship with the architect, meeting almost weekly with the design," Mrozinski said. "We really had the opportunity for the faculty to give input in the project. It was their idea, the layout of the three kitchens, to have the one kitchen with workstations. That's going to be really beneficial to the students not to have to be sharing equipment like they do in other kitchen labs."

The reason for the expansion is the growth since the culinary arts program was started in the 1970s. Mrozinski said this year there was a 12-percent increase in enrollment in the department, and in 2008-09 there was a 14-percent increase.

"We're going to have what amounts to almost twice as much floor space," he said. "The capacity of our existing facility is limited, and that was the main driver for this project."

LCCC offers three degrees in the program: culinary arts, pastry arts management and hospitality business management,

formerly known as hotel and restaurant management. Many young people are expected to go on to higher education in what is a growing field, and LCCC is prepared.

Mrozinski said the college has a relationship with the West Side and Wilkes-Barre career and technical centers - West Side Career and Technical Center recently enlarged and updated its own culinary arts department - as well as the Hazleton Area Career Center and vocational-technical schools in Susquehanna, Wallenpaupack and Lackawanna County. Students who complete their program on the secondary-school level can attend LCCC with credits towards their degrees, he said.

The culinary arts program also attracts adult learners, including people who might want to take a course or two but not necessarily earn a degree. Mrozinski said he would like to see an expansion of the continuing education programs. He sees the new culinary arts center as being a resource for the community, as well.

"We haven't explored that yet, but we're sure there will be opportunities," he said.

12/14/2009

### **'Christmas in the Park' a festive Sunday in Nanticoke Businesses and organizations kick in with all of the trimmings**

Camille Fioti - Times Leader

Despite the relentless rain, excited children waited in a long line to see Santa in the city's Patriot Park on Sunday. Huddled under umbrellas, hundreds celebrated the 12th annual "Christmas in the Park." Judge-elect Tina Polachek Gartley was the Grand Marshal of the parade, which opened the festivities. Fire departments from the city and surrounding communities, local Scouts and a number of businesses and organizations participated in the parade. The high school's marching band had to cancel because of the weather, said organizer Linda Prushinski, "The director lives in Mountain Top and it was a sheet of ice up there," she said. "He said he wasn't going to take a chance and I don't blame him."

Prushinski, who is also the secretary for the city's Chamber of Commerce, said the event, which usually draws 200 to 300 people each year, was never cancelled due to the weather.

Nearly 20 local businesses and organizations provided volunteers, homemade food, money, raffle prizes and gifts for the children.

"I'll be honest," said a shivering Mike Gryskevicz, 15, as he and his brother Tony, 17, munched on chocolate chip cookies made by Luzerne County Community College's culinary students. "I came here for the food." The boys, who both live in Plains Township, said they also came to watch their dad, Bernard, a city firefighter, in the parade.

"Bye-bye Santa," said 6-year-old Henry Sedorchuk IV, waving as he hurried to get a hot dog under a tent, while his mom, Annie, held his hot cocoa and his dad, Henry III, held his bag of toys and gloves from Santa. Little Henry, who is a Tiger Scout, walked in the parade with the rest of his den from Cub Scout Pack 415.

Despite the weather, the turnout was great, said Jerry Hudak, president of the Chamber of Commerce, in the shadow of a gigantic 30-foot fiberglass snowman. "It might be a little damp," he said. "But it just goes to show you, that when everyone comes together, we can pull off something very successful, regardless of what obstacles are thrown our way."

12/13/2009

### **Free swine flu clinic at GNA School District**

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[The Greater Nanticoke Area School District](#) is doubling as a health clinic Tuesday as free swine flu shots will be distributed.

District nurses and area paramedics will be distributing 400 swine flu shots from 1 to 6 p.m. in the high school auditorium.

Anyone living within the district boundaries needs to bring an ID and utility bill or other proof of residency within the district.

District Superintendent Tony Perrone has been a huge proponent of providing swine flu vaccines because of the early warnings from the national and state health departments about the possibility of a pandemic. He believes the more people who get vaccinated the safer everyone will be.

"I was a nervous wreck worrying about kids and what we would ever do if we had an epidemic. I am so glad so far there isn't any. I am glad so far people are getting shots, too. It is better to be safe than sorry," Perrone said.

Luzerne County Community College offered swine flu vaccines to its students and families of students on Thursday and

Friday at its Public Safety Training Institute. There are no more vaccine clinics scheduled at the college at this time.

12/13/2009

### **Troops honored at Freedom Salute**

### **Two area guardsmen are the first in Pennsylvania to receive Keystone Freedom Medals.**

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For Staff Sgt. John Edwards of the 109th National Guard Field Artillery, going overseas was a matter of duty. "It's something you just feel you are supposed to do," the Harveys Lake resident said as to why he volunteered to serve in Iraq for a third tour of duty.

Edwards, 34, and Sgt. Richard Smith received the Keystone Freedom Medal during the Freedom Salute presentation Saturday morning at the 109th Bravo Battery's armory on Main Street in Nanticoke.

They were the first National Guardsmen in Pennsylvania to receive the award during a Freedom Salute Ceremony, said unit spokesman Sgt. John Paul Karpovich.

The medal was recently established by state National Guard leadership officers to honor soldiers who have served three tours of duty as a National Guard soldier.

"We need to do something to show that these guys are going above and beyond, and we are going to recognize them for doing that. They have served their country honorably," Karpovich said.

Edwards previously served in Germany from 2002-03 and in Afghanistan from 2007-08.

Deputy Commanding General of the 28th Infantry Division, Col. Walt Lord, told the 109th troops that they are "ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things," just as militia members did in during the Revolutionary War.

Lord said all soldiers realize when they sign up to serve in the Guard, they may be called to serve abroad. But the soldiers that serve two or three tours of duty usually volunteer, and their dedication to the America needs to be recognized, he said.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 17,000 National Guardsmen, some of whom have served multiple tours, served overseas, Lord said.

With Edwards' extensive overseas experience, many of the younger troops turned to him as a mentor as they prepared with a few months of training in Mississippi and Louisiana before arriving in Kuwait last January and then moving into Iraq.

"Being in a leadership position, you share your experiences with the younger guys. They ask. Everyone's curious, just like I was the first time. You want to know what is going on," he said. "It kind of sets their mind at ease. They kinda get a good idea of what they are going to see before they see it, so they are very appreciative when you share that information with them."

Edwards and his 88 comrades came home in September.

Soldiers that deployed overseas with the National Guard for the first time were presented a wood display case, commemorative coin and a "Defender of Freedom" certificate.

Several soldiers were deployed for a second time. Those soldiers will receive a custom-made ring and those with multiple tours that are married were awarded a mantel clock.

12/12/2009

### **Homecoming held for the 109th**

### **Field artillery unit nominated for best artillery battery award in National Guard.**

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The 109th Pennsylvania National Guard Field Artillery welcomed back 89 of its own Friday night during a homecoming ceremony at the armory.

Members from Battery B in Nanticoke who deployed to Iraq as part of the 109th Field Artillery 56th Stryker Brigade made history three times during the tour.

They were the first National Guard unit equipped with the M777A2 howitzer to destroy an enemy target on April 15.

Also, the unit was honored for two other historic firsts: Firing artillery in Kuwait and firing artillery in Iraq.

The 109th Field Artillery has been nominated for the Hamilton Award to recognize the best artillery battery in the U.S. Army National Guard.

The guardsmen arrived in Kuwait in late January, after being in Camp Shelby, Miss., and Fort Polk, La., in the latter part of 2008. The unit arrived home three months ago.

Unit commander Lt. Col. Kevin Miller praised the soldiers for their service at Friday night's ceremony.

"It was extraordinary. It is historic. It is a piece of our history, a piece of who we are and something we will always be proud of," Miller said.

Miller reminded them that the unit is not yet whole because six members are still in battle zones.

Luzerne County Commissioner Stephen A. Urban, who is a retired Army lieutenant colonel, commended the soldiers for going half-a-world away.

"You sacrificed a great deal while serving in Iraq ... for the freedom of children to walk the streets safely and the freedom for people to open businesses," he said.

Five unit members also were recognized for heroic efforts to save three people from a two-vehicle crash in a construction zone on Interstate 81 near the Minersville exit on Sept. 16, 2008.

Capt. Joseph Ruotolo, Capt. Jason Grentus, 1st Sgt. Jamie Sorber, Staff Sgt. William Dutzar and Sgt. Christopher Keen were presented the Pennsylvania Distinguished Service Medal.

"The swift, courageous and selfless actions of these magnificent citizen-soldiers most likely saved the lives of both occupants of the overturned vehicle and certainly prevented other accidents along the heavily traveled interstate," Sgt. John Karpovich said as the men received their medals.

Five wives were also recognized with the Artillery Order of Molly Pitcher Award for their support, dedication and service to the 109th. They were: Karen Bigos, Amanda Lukashewski, Kirsten Macking, Lisa McMichael and Janet Wegryznowicz.

Congratulations 109th..You make us all proud!!

J.D. Verazin - Nanticoke City Webdesign and an alumnus of Nanticoke's own 109th! 1970-1977

12/8/2009

### **GNA chooses Kozlofski as head of school board**

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A new president took office during the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board's annual reorganization meeting Monday, but things will remain largely consistent, which is exactly the way the board wants it.

Jeff Kozlofski, a 12-year board member, was voted in as president, while the vice presidential position was voted again to Kenny James. Vito DeLuca was reapproved as the board's solicitor.

Kozlofski said he agreed to be president because he can be available often. "With my schedule, I can come down here on a minute's notice," he said.

Many of the board members have been there for years, he said, and they all agree to switch off responsibilities.

"We like to rotate it all the time, to give everyone another chance," he said. "We all work together. We work as a team, so it's a lot easier."

Kozlofski said he planned during his tenure to continue the board's emphasis on increasing educational success, particularly test scores. "The education is the main thing," he said. "It's all good things for a change."

In other business, the board hired attorney Jack Dean at \$165 per hour as the chief negotiator for contract talks with the teachers union. It also voted to post for applicants for several positions: a cafeteria worker for six hours daily, a head football coach for the 2010 season and a special education teacher to replace Barbara Wynn, who retired in October. Jamie Beggs, a sports coach, was hired as the head of the Electives Department for 2009-10 after Deborah Krupinski, another athletic coach, resigned, citing insufficient time.

The board accepted a letter of intent from Barbara Zaborney to retire in June at the end of the school year.

12/7/2009

### **"Christmas in the Park"**

Mike McGinley - Times Leader

When asked if children like "Christmas in the Park" in the city of Nanticoke, event chairperson Linda Prushinski laughs because the turnout is so overwhelming.

"Last year, the line for Santa Claus went halfway around the park," she said.

Fortunately, the Irem Temple Clowns will be on hand to mingle in the crowd. "That should help keep the kids occupied," she said.

Children get the chance to meet Santa Claus after the annual parade, which begins at 2 p.m. Sunday at Greater

Nanticoke Area High School on Kosciuszko Street, processes down Green Street and ends at Patriot Square Park. "I would say we get between 200 and 300 people," Prushinski, 55, of Nanticoke, said. "Last year, it was 50 degrees and gorgeous so everybody was there."

But locals might not recognize Patriot Square Park on Sunday.

"It won't look like it normally does," Prushinski teased. "I can guarantee that."

The chairperson said it'll be transformed into a "winter wonderland" thanks to a plethora of decorations like colored snowflakes, old-fashioned paper chains hanging from trees and a 30-foot-high snowman that volunteers will try to put over the statue in the middle of the park.

"We're going to try to go on Saturday to start decorating," Prushinski said.

Besides the decorations in the park, the parade and a visit from Santa, families can listen to music thanks to the Greater Nanticoke Area High School Chorus and John "Stanky" Stankovic.

"Last year (Stankovic) played while the kids sang Christmas Carols," Prushinski recalled.

12/4/2009

### **Tree at Nanticoke city building has special story**

Rob Olsen covers Newport and Hanover townships. He can be reached at [robolsencv@verizon.net](mailto:robolsencv@verizon.net).

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas ... thanks to the Greater Nanticoke Area's Dads' Group. For the second year in a row, the group has supplied and trimmed a tree in the meeting room of the Nanticoke municipal building.

On Tuesday, the nine dads and 16 children that make up the group spread the holiday cheer by decorating the seven-foot tree, donated by The Home Depot, with lights, garland, and hand-made ornaments created by the children.

Several women from the municipal building, including Betsy Cheshinski, Donna Wall, Veronica Navroth, Pam Heard and Holly Quinn, volunteered to stay late to assist. They also provided goodie bags for the children as well as cookies and juice.

Several members of Junior Girl Scout Troop 3318 also participated in the evening's festivities, assisting the children in craft making activities and story-time. Scouts Mallory Dixon, Emily Lehman, Alyson Muse and Sara Desino helped the children make snowflakes and paint ceramic decorations for the tree.

The group soon will be participating in other events such as a night at Chuck E. Cheese, a roller skating night, and a night at the movies. All events are paid for by a grant the Family Center receives to run the group.

For information on the group or to become a member, contact GNA Family Center Director Diane Klish at 735-0935.

The group is open to all dads, including expectant and stay-at-home, in Luzerne County and meets once a week at the Family Center in Sheatown, Newport Township.

12/4/2009

### **Nanticoke cash surplus evaporates**

### **The city's property tax will hold steady under the proposed 2010 budget.**

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City Council members unanimously approved the first reading of the \$3.94 million 2010 budget Wednesday evening.

At a previous presentation of the 2010 preliminary budget late last month, council members learned the city was expected to have a \$45,000 extra "cushion" with which to end the year. Council did not vote on the budget then because the mayor wanted time for elected officials to review it. Although the cushion is gone, council members are not considering raising taxes.

The city's property tax rate in 2010 will remain the same as 2009's rate of 1.45 mills. A mill is a \$1 tax on every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

The city's earned income tax rate will remain at 2 percent, as approved a few days ago by a Luzerne County judge.

There will be no commuter tax in Nanticoke in 2010.

City Treasurer Al Wytoshek asked City Finance Director Pamela Heard during Wednesday's meeting what happened to the surplus amount the city thought it was originally going to have at the end of 2010.

Heard said that a combination of lower-than-expected property values from the county and higher expenses in workers' compensation expenses depleted the excess funds.

Officials originally believed the city would receive \$541,087 in real estate tax revenues based on an assessed property value of \$3.73 million. Updated figures show the city should receive approximately \$489,679 in real estate taxes.

City Administrator Holly Quinn said the city's insurance broker is attempting to get quotes from other workers'

compensation insurance firms to get a lower price on its insurance costs.

The workers' compensation fees are highest in the police department at \$102,526, and for paid and volunteer members of the fire department at \$76,485, according to the updated budget. Workers' compensation expenses for the street department total \$41,845. Other departments' workers' compensation fees are less than \$1,100 for each department. Wytoshek has been critical of the salaries and benefit packages for Heard and Quinn because he says he believes they do not have enough experience and have not proven themselves on the job yet. He said this is not a personal attack against the women, but rather he is worried about the city's finances.

Council members have repeatedly defended Heard and Quinn's job qualifications, saying they are well worth what they are paid.

"Since Act 47 has been in place and we've had the administrator and financial person, we've probably paid off \$3.5 million of debt, but because it was close to \$5 million on old debt," Mayor John Bushko said.

Council members did not give Heard a raise in 2010 because she had just started in mid-August. She currently makes \$45,000 per year, plus benefits. Other employees will receive raises as stipulated in their union contracts.

12/3/2009

### **Nanticoke townhouse developer files complaint against new owners**

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The developer of a city townhouse complex and its new owner met in magistrate's court Wednesday in an attempt to settle unfinished business.

Dominic Ortolani, developer of Lexington Village on Kosciuszko Street, filed a civil complaint against Narberth Property Acquisition LLC, which holds the mortgage on the property from Philadelphia-based Royal Bank America. Ortolani wants to retrieve his possessions - furniture and tools - from the model home being used to show prospective tenants, the community center and one of the garages. He also wants to charge \$6,500 rent for use of his property. Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker allowed Ortolani and attorneys David Schwager of Wilkes-Barre and Nancy Glidden of West Chester, representing Narberth Property Acquisitions, and Tim Bricker, senior vice president of Portfolio Work for Royal Bank America to settle the matter amicably.

Ortolani alleged that since late spring, he has been trying to remove his property, but the owners have not responded. "I thought this was just another game they were playing," he said.

The owners wanted Ortolani to submit a list of his belongings to ensure he wasn't taking anything of theirs. Bricker said he never received a list; Whittaker made a copy.

Bricker told Ortolani he had no problem returning his furniture, and if Ortolani would pick a date to get everything out, he would come up from the Philadelphia area. They agreed to do so. Whittaker said if any of Ortolani's property is missing or damaged, he can file another civil complaint.

Lexington Village was originally envisioned as a 55-unit senior independent living complex. A proposed 66-bed Alzheimer's facility was never built.

A \$260,000 grant from state Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, and state Sen. Raphael Musto, D-Pittston Township, was used to reclaim the 12.5 acres of former strip mine land for the project.

State and city officials were optimistic about the project, which they hoped was a sign of Nanticoke's revitalization. But matters soon soured: contractors sued Lexington Village LP, of which Ortolani was principal, for unpaid bills.

Through its attorneys, Royal Bank America filed a civil complaint against Ortolani in Luzerne County Court on July 9, 2008. It alleged Ortolani owed \$7,272,210 for defaulting on three loans the bank issued in 2005 and 2007.

The Lexington Village property was put up for sheriff's sale in October 2008, December 2008, February 2009 and on April 3, 2009. The claim on the property was \$5,723,528. Lexington Village LP filed for bankruptcy on April 2, 2009. Narberth Property Acquisition LLC, which was assigned the Lexington Village mortgage by Royal Bank America, purchased the property at a Luzerne County sheriff's sale on June 12.

On June 16, Lexington Village LP petitioned federal court to dismiss the case "due to the fact this bankruptcy matter involves a single asset and the debtor's largest secured creditor, Narberth Property Acquisitions, has obtained relief from the automatic stay, and took back the property." It was dismissed on July 17.

12/2/2009

### **Nanticoke considers home rule**

**Voters will decide in May whether to have commission study the city's government.**

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Officials are contemplating whether the city should adopt a home rule form of government.

Last month, council members adopted an ordinance to let voters decide in May whether a government study commission should be formed with seven members to review the existing third-class city form of government. The panel would decide if it would be in the city's best interest to become home rule like four other area municipalities. This will be the first time Nanticoke voters will consider creating a government study commission.

Wilkes-Barre, Wilkes-Barre Township, Kingston and Kingston Township already are home rule communities in Luzerne County.

City officials must at least explore other options on how to properly run city government by adopting a home rule charter or an optional plan of government, as stipulated in the city's original financial recovery plan by the Pennsylvania Economy League.

The league was hired by the state as the city's financial recovery coordinator.

The May election will not determine whether the city becomes home rule or adopts another form of government, but rather, voters will decide if they want a commission formed to review how the city government works and elect seven members to serve on the board.

Even if voters want to vote against the commission, they can still vote for seven people to serve on the board, Luzerne County Elections Bureau Director Leonard Piazza said.

If voters approve a commission, it will begin meeting to conduct an in-depth study of the city government, look into the procedures of the government to determine its weaknesses or defects and look at how other municipalities operate.

"The commissioners must be aware their work is likely to have a long-term influence on the affairs of their community," states the Home Rule Handbook distributed by the state Department of Community and Economic Development.

After government study commissioners meet for several months, they will either decide that there are no changes that need to be made or they will draft a charter detailing how the new government will operate. That charter would then be presented to Nanticoke voters to be approved or denied.

City officials say they believe it would be in the community's best interest to at least form a commission.

"The third-class city code is archaic. It hasn't been changed in 30 or 40 years. We can go up so high with our taxes. You are limited on what you can do," said Mayor John Bushko.

Currently, as officials of an Act 47 distressed municipality, they must go before a county judge every year to request the earned income tax remain at 2 percent for residents working in Nanticoke or another community.

People who live outside the city but work within the city limits pay a 1.33 percent commuter tax if approved annually by the judge.

Under a home rule or other government plan, the city could establish the earned income tax and commuter tax as standard rates.

Bushko also noted that becoming home rule would also give the city more control over other government functions, including allowing a strong-mayor system of government to give future mayors veto power.

Now the mayor has only a single vote like council members.

Wilkes-Barre, Wilkes-Barre Township, Kingston and Kingston Township are home rule communities.

11/28/2009

**Animal rights supporters protest at Nanticoke furrier**

**Voice of the Animals members target RK Furs, the region's last furrier, in a demonstration held across from the Kirmar Street store.**

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Seven animal rights proponents eschewed shopping on Black Friday to instead deter the purchase of fur, but the impact of their protest was open to interpretation.

On one side, a variety of motorists passing on Kirmar Street, including the driver of a Newport Township ambulance, honked their approval of the Voice of the Animals members. Several people even pulled up to give up fur coats, which the group will be donating to orphaned and rehabilitating wildlife.

On the other side, some – primarily men in pickup trucks – offered only derogatory gestures or suggestions that the protesters should "get a life."

One gentleman even drove by twice, honking to attract attention to furs lying across the bow of the fishing boat he was towing.

Through it all, the employees and the few visitors across the street at RK Furs, the region's last furrier and the target of the protest, seemed to disregard the clamor. A few faces appeared at the door to observe the protesters, but no one engaged them.

Either way, the group felt it had imparted its message: While its members have been focusing on other cruelty issues in recent years, they hadn't forgotten about fur.

"We had almost succeeded in closing all of the local furriers in the 1990s," Melinda Dugan said. "Guess what? We didn't go anywhere. Here we are – 20 years older."

The protesters are particularly concerned about the methods used to procure the fur. From anal electrocution to trapping and clubbing, the animals often die in gruesome ways, they said. In countries such as China, where animals are strangled, strung up and skinned, they aren't always dead before their skins are removed.

"They squirm around on the hooks, so they're alive," said Jessyca Horst.

"There's very little oversight. ... If they would be treated humanely," said Karen Kepic, "there would be no problem." She cited as an example of smaller farms, where animals see daylight, are raised kindly and are slaughtered quickly with as little discomfort to the animal as possible.

China is also notorious for obscuring the origin of its fur. "Even if it says it's man-made fur, if it's from China, it's questionable," Dugan said. The members noted two bills being considered by federal legislators that would require accurate labeling of fur items.

She also questioned why, in an age of constant technological advancements in fabrics and resource procurement, steel traps are still used to capture animals.

11/28/2009

**Scores go to Patton viewing**

**Burial services for Navy Petty Officer Brian M. Patton of Nanticoke will be today at Corpus Christi Parish.**

slong@timesleader.com

U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer David Kinnaird lost not only one of his best leaders, but also a personal friend on Nov. 19 when Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian M. Patton died.

The Brian M. Patton Memorial Fund to benefit Patton's two sons, Nicholas, 8, and Brian James, 19, and his wife has been set up at PNC Bank, his wife confirmed.

Patton's funeral will be at 10 a.m. today at Corpus Christi Parish, formerly St. Adalbert's Church, 31 S. Market St., in the Glen Lyon section of Newport Township.

He will then be laid to rest in the church's cemetery.

"He was a go-to guy. He was a natural leader. People would follow him. Definitely a wonderful sailor, one of my best sailors ... He always got the job done," Kinnaird said.

Kinnaird, stationed overseas with Patton and other deployed sailors, escorted his friend's body home.

Kinnaird joined hundreds of other friends, family, co-workers and fellow Navy personnel who filtered into Greater Nanticoke Area High School's gym Friday night to pay respects to Patton.

Patton, 37, died Nov. 19 in northern Kuwait in an automobile crash shortly after calling his wife, Amy Hynoski Patton, to wish her a happy anniversary. They were married for nine years.

Two flags – an American and Alabama state flag that flew over Camp Buehring, Kuwait, the day he died – were hung in the gym to honor the fallen sailor. The draped flags were stationed on the ends of a table where photos of Patton and his family were displayed.

Both flags were a gift from the Alabama-based unit that is deployed at Buehring, where Patton was stationed.

An honor guard team from the State Correctional Institution at Dallas, where Patton had worked, stood guard in front of Patton's casket. Team members rotated out every 15 minutes.

People could reflect on the good times as they viewed a collage of several pictures of Patton at events, including his wedding.

Family friend Cathy Sadowski of Nanticoke recalled that Patton liked to laugh and have a good time. She and her friends came out to show support for his wife and two sons, 8-year old Nicholas and 19-year old Brian James. Patton also has a 12-year old stepson, Tyler Kozlofski.

Several fellow Navy Reserve members drove four hours from their base headquarters in Rochester, N.Y., to say goodbye to their friend, who they said always brought a smile to their faces with his jokes.

"He was very funny. He liked to joke around all the time. He took the pressures off training. He was a good guy," said Petty Officer 1st Class Marlin Angelo.

Patton was proud and eager to serve his country again because he volunteered to be deployed to Kuwait, said Angelo, of Williamsport.

Patton was deployed to the Middle East in June with the Naval Security Force from Rochester, N.Y., to support Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom. It was his second tour in the region.

He also served during Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s.

While any deployment entails danger, Patton's fellow sailors said they never expected anything to happen to him.

"He had a real love for life, so it was shocking," one sailor said when he learned of the vehicle crash.

Elected officials, such as state Rep. John Yudichak, U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski and several Nanticoke city officials came out as a way to thank Patton for his service.

Kanjorski presented the family with an American flag that was specifically flown over the U.S. Capitol in the last few days in Patton's honor.

Nanticoke mayor-elect Joe Dougherty did not know Patton but said he was honored to know that such a great man and patriot called the city home.

"We are grateful for what he did and what men and women like him do by going out serving the country and doing what they have to do to protect us," Dougherty said.

As SCI-Dallas Superintendent Jerome Walsh and Deputy Superintendent Vince Mooney left the wake Friday, they vowed to "provide as much support as we can" to Patton's family, Mooney said.

Walsh added that the prison, where Patton worked as a correctional officer, was also reeling from the news that fellow sailor and correctional officer David Morgan was seriously wounded in the crash. He's still recovering at the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with both men and their families right now," Walsh said.

11/26/2009

**A fallen serviceman**

**Patton's body back home**

**Residents express their condolences**

slong@timesleader.com

Thanksgiving is taking on a new whole meaning for some in the wake of the death last week of U.S. Naval Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian M. Patton.

Pay your respects...

The Brian M. Patton Memorial Fund to benefit Patton's two sons, Nicholas, 8, and Brian James, 19, and his wife has been set up at PNC Bank, his wife confirmed.

Patton's wake will be from 5 to 9 p.m. Friday in the [Nanticoke Area High School](#) gym. His funeral will be at 10 a.m. Saturday at St. Adalbert's Church, 31 S. Market St., in the Glen Lyon section of Newport Township.

He will then be laid to rest in the church's cemetery.

The 37-year-old Nanticoke resident died Nov. 19 in northern Kuwait after a vehicle crash that seriously injured his friend and colleague David Morgan, who was still at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland on Wednesday afternoon.

"Feels like your heart is broken," said Joe Weiss.

Calling it "just tragic," he expressed how sad it was that Patton had died, especially around the holidays and being so far from home and his family.

Weiss, who said he doesn't know the Patton family, retired from the U.S. Army in 1995 after more than 24 years of service.

Patton's body was returned to Nanticoke on Wednesday morning at about 11:30 after a state police escort to the Stegura Funeral Home in Nanticoke. He will be laid to rest at a funeral at 10 a.m. Saturday at St. Adalbert's Church in Newport Township.

Patton's death hit home for Donna Shook of Hanover Township. Although she said she doesn't know the Patton family personally, she feels a bond with them because her 19-year-old nephew is in the U.S. Navy and currently stationed in San Diego, Calif.

"I feel for the family more than anything. I can't imagine the heartache that the family feels. My heart goes out to the family," Shook said, adding that Patton's death reminds her to be thankful for what her family has and be thankful for what all military personnel do to keep America safe.

"He is a hero in my eyes even though I didn't know him," she said.

Patton was deployed to the Middle East in June with the Naval Security Force from Rochester, N.Y., to support

Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom. It was his second tour in the region. He served during Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s.

11/25/2009

**Police escort to bring fallen soldier home**

**Services for Petty Officer Brian M. Patton set for this weekend in Nanticoke area.**

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A fallen Navy reservist who died in Kuwait will be returned home to Nanticoke today from Delaware with a state police escort, his wife, Amy Hynoski Patton, confirmed.

The escort is expected to arrive at the Stegura Funeral Home in Nanticoke at about 11 a.m. Wake and funeral services for U.S. Naval Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian M. Patton will be held this weekend.

Patton, a military police officer, died Thursday in an automobile crash in northern Kuwait. Patton's law enforcement experience also included his job as a prison guard at State Correctional Institution at Dallas.

Patton's wake will be held from 5 to 9 p.m. Friday in the [Nanticoke Area High School gym](#). His funeral will be at 10 a.m. Saturday at St. Adalbert's Church on 31 S. Market St. in the Glen Lyon section of Newport Township.

He will then be laid to rest in the church's cemetery.

The Brian M. Patton Memorial Fund to benefit Patton's two sons, Nicholas, 8, and Brian James, 19, and his wife has been set up at [PNC Bank](#), his wife confirmed.

Patton, 37, was deployed to the Middle East in June to serve with the Naval Security Force from Rochester, N.Y., to support Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom. His body was returned stateside Friday night at Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Del.

Patton's friend and colleague at SCI-Dallas and in Kuwait, David Morgan, was injured in the crash. Morgan is in the intensive care unit at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland as of Tuesday afternoon.

11/24/2009

**Brian Patton, killed in the Middle East, to be honored**

**A final salute for a war hero**

boboyle@timesleader.com

His buddy said you always knew when Brian Patton walked into the room.

"Man, he was loud and full of fun," recalled Vince McClosky of Wilkes-Barre. "He was outgoing and always wanted to be the center of attention; he was the life of the party. You always knew he was there."

**On Friday, Patton's casket will be at the [Greater Nanticoke Area High School](#) gymnasium so that family and friends can pay respects to the fallen hero. He is expected to be buried on Saturday, according to Jonathon Stegura of Stegura Funeral Home in Nanticoke.**

Patton died Thursday morning in an automobile crash in Kuwait. A military police officer with the Naval Security Force from Rochester, N.Y., he was stationed in June in northern Kuwait, where he was supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom.

"You won't ever find a guy like that again," McClosky said. "He can't be replaced."

McClosky worked with Patton at the State Correctional Institution at Dallas, along with fellow sailor David Morgan, who was critically injured in the crash.

Patton came home for leave last month and was scheduled to end his tour in late February or early March. McClosky and Morgan lived with Patton in Kuwait and the three became good friends.

"We got to be pretty close," McClosky said. "We first met in 2007, and we hit it off immediately."

Stegura said he is awaiting release of Patton's body from the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland. He said funeral arrangements will be finalized once he knows when Patton's body will be returned home.

McClosky said he, Patton and Morgan were "individual augmentees," part of the Law and Order Detachment.

"The three of us decided to be deployed together," McClosky said. "We were part of the same group in Rochester and then we were tagged for mobilization."

McClosky returned home last week. His first day back he heard the news about his friend.

"I just got home and I was told Brian was killed," McClosky said.

McClosky, 23, said Patton, 37, was in a vehicle that was struck head-on by another vehicle on a paved road between Camp Buehring and Camp Virginia in Kuwait.

"They were on a police call," he said. "I was told a car was passing a convoy at a high rate of speed when they came to a hill and there was a blind spot."

McClosky said he knows Patton's wife and two children. He said the next few days will be difficult to get through.

"I lost a friend, a co-worker and a father figure," McClosky said. "Brian knew my dad too; my dad works at SCID too.

He told me to make sure I brought Brian back and Brian always had my back, too."

McClosky said he feels a sense of guilt that he wasn't there when Patton was killed.

"He took his job and his duty to his country very serious," McClosky said. "He often gave me advice about life and everything."

McClosky said he's still in shock over Patton's death.

"Everybody tells me not to feel guilty, but I can't help it," he said. "Every day it seems to get better, but then I lose it again. I just can't believe it."

McClosky said Morgan is still in critical condition at Bethesda Hospital. He said he hopes to get there to visit his friend this week.

"He just turned 35 the other day," McClosky said of Morgan. "When you train as a soldier, you prepare for losses in war and casualties; but you're never prepared for friends to go this way.

11/20/2009

### **Local serviceman killed in Kuwait**

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A U.S. Navy reservist from Nanticoke died Thursday in Kuwait as a result of a head-on crash with a civilian vehicle, his family said. Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian Patton, 37, was traveling in a Dodge Durango when a civilian contractor in a pick-up truck crashed into his vehicle while trying to pass a military convoy, according to his wife.

Amy Hynoski Patton said her husband called around 11:47 p.m. Wednesday, their ninth wedding anniversary, and the two spoke about an upcoming trip they were planning to Hawaii. The crash occurred a little after midnight, the military told her.

"The guy behind didn't want to wait for the convoy, got in the other lane and hit him head-on,"

Hynoski Patton said in a cell phone call on her way to Dover Air Force Base in Dover, Del., where

her husband's body will arrive tonight.

Hynoski Patton and Patton's two brothers will be on hand for the arrival ceremony.

"It's so surreal. It hasn't hit me. I'm sure it will tonight. I keep waiting for him to call," Hynoski Patton said.

Patton, a veteran of the first Gulf War, is a member of a Naval Reserve unit based in Binghamton, N.Y. He volunteered for the Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment to Kuwait to serve as a military police officer, his wife said. The unit left in March.

Patton was home on leave between Oct. 13 and Oct. 30. The highlight of his visit home was a trip to South Bend, Ind. with his wife and youngest son to see a Notre Dame Fighting Irish football game.

"He was a big Notre Dame fan, and he was never at Notre Dame," Hynoski Patton said.

In addition to Notre Dame, Patton was a big fan of the Chicago Cubs and North Carolina Tar Heels, she said.

Patton leaves behind two sons, Brian, 19, and Nicholas, 8, along with stepson, Tyler, 12.

"My youngest son idolized him. He was attached to him at the hip," Hynoski Patton said.

Before Patton left, he gave his wife a gold necklace with a Jesus charm and said, "Make sure you give this to Nicholas if I don't come back," Hynoski Patton said.

Nicholas is now wearing the necklace.

Patton was a prison guard at State Correctional Institution at Dallas, which released a statement.

"Acting Superintendent Jerome Walsh and the entire staff at SCI-Dallas send their sincere condolences to the family and friends of fallen sailor Brian Patton. His passing will be deeply felt among the staff at our facility. He was employed as a corrections officer for four years at SCI-Dallas, and had touched the lives of many. He will be sorely missed by all his friends and fellow workers."

Family said the funeral likely will be next week from the Stanley Stegura Funeral Home in Nanticoke.

11/20/2009

### **City holds line on taxes for 2010**

**The proposed spending plan is only slightly larger than this year's and lower than 2008's.**

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Property taxes in the city will not increase under a \$3.9 million 2010 budget, city council members learned at Wednesday's meeting.

The council was presented with the 2010 spending plan that showed the real estate tax rate will remain 1.4573 mills. A mill rate is \$1 for every \$1,000 assessed tax value.

The city's Earned Income Tax rate is expected to remain at 1.5 percent if approved by a Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas judge early next week.

The general fund budget for 2010 is greater than 2009's by \$26,365, but it is \$254,288 less than the 2008 budget.

Workers' compensation expenses were one of the biggest percentage increases in the 2010, Finance Director Pamela Heard told council members. The workers' compensation fees, paid to the State Workers Insurance Fund through the Department of Labor, are based on how many employees are injured and the extent of their injuries.

City Administrator Holly Quinn said the city still has its safety committee and is working to find other ways to trim the workers' compensation bill.

Higher health care costs and pay raises as stipulated in union contracts are other increased expenses, Heard said.

Council members did not vote on the budget because Mayor John Bushko said he just received his packet shortly before the meeting and wanted to review it. The council must vote on the budget twice before the end of December for it to be approved.

In other business, council approved an agreement with the Fraternal Order of Police and Nanticoke Police Officers Association for extra compensation for Officer Brian Kivler, who is the handler for Vice, the city's K9 dog.

Quinn said under the federal Labor Standards Act the city must pay Kivler a minimum wage rate for a 14 hours a week for caring for Vice. Kivler will receive approximately \$5,300 per year to care for the dog that lives with him.

"It is basically minimal, but we are required to pay this young man for the handling and care of this dog outside city time," Quinn said.

Minimum wage is \$ 7.25 per hour, according to the state Department of Labor and Industry.

The city received a \$250,000 Conservation Works grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection to replace the municipal building's 25-year old HVAC air-conditioning and heating system. The city spent \$20,000 this summer to fix the unit when it quit cooling the building.

Quinn believes the city could save at least \$15,000 in energy costs because the new unit is energy-efficient and will feature new duct work and a zone control system.

She also reported the sale of two city vehicles was successful through an auction Web site, municibid.com.

The 1978 Hahn fire truck sold for a \$1,000 and a former street department snow plow pickup sold for \$3,060. The fire truck was advertised for one week and the pickup truck was advertised for roughly 10 days.

Previously when the city sought to sell the vehicles, no bids were received.

11/20/2009

### **Byorick sidelined by knee injury**

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Aly Byorick's college basketball career is on hold again.

The former Nanticoke great, who plays for Lehigh University, suffered a torn ACL two weeks ago and will be sidelined for the entire season.

Byorick, who had to sit out last year after transferring to Lehigh from Xavier at the end of the 2007 season, was expected to be a key member the Mountain Hawks team this year. But as fate would have it, she was hurt just a few days from the season opener.

"We were scrimmaging in practice," said Byorick, a 6-foot sophomore guard. "I went to box someone out and another player came and fell right on top of my knee. It turned the wrong way and gave out."

It was a devastating blow emotionally for Byorick.

"I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I knew right away it was a torn ACL because I heard my knee pop. I was screaming and crying, but I knew what happened."

Byorick said she is scheduled to undergo knee surgery the second week in December. It will be performed by the team doctor.

"From there it's going to be a slow process," she said. "It's going to take a long time to get my knee in shape to play Division I basketball, but I know I can do it."

Byorick was a two-time All-American at Nanticoke, where she became the school's all-time leading scorer with 2,271 points. She signed with Division I Xavier, but transferred to Lehigh after seeing limited playing time at the Ohio school. She's still trying to deal with the disappointment of having to miss another season. She plans to petition the NCAA for an extra year of eligibility due to medical reasons, which would give her three years of eligibility if granted. "I have my moments," Byorick said. "On the outside I'm fine, but sometimes I crumble on the inside. I have to stay strong. It's unfortunate, but I'm not going to get anywhere by feeling sorry for myself."

11/16/2009

### **Support professionals called unsung heroes**

Times Leader - Mailbag letters from readers

Support professionals in the Greater Nanticoke Area School District and in schools across the nation will be in the spotlight Wednesday, as students, parents, administrators and the community celebrate the National Education Association's annual Educational Support Professionals Day.

Education support professionals are equal and essential partners in the education process. They include office employees, cafeteria workers, custodians, maintenance workers, hall monitors and computer and technical aides. Often, educational support professionals are the first people our children encounter each day. They are the unsung heroes who keep our schools going, and it is time that we recognize their hard work and expertise by telling them thank you.

Our jobs are very rewarding and very often thankless. But we get a great feeling knowing we helped to instill the character values that help children become lifelong learners, responsible adults and kind, caring people.

Happy Educational Support Professionals Day to all!

J.D. Verazin President,  
Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Support Professionals  
Nanticoke

11/16/2009

### **Nanticoke man lends time, talents to veterans**

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Bob Shonk isn't a veteran, but when the members of the American Legion Post 463 in Plymouth needed a new roof, he took care of them as if they were family.

"They really got hit hard," Shonk said. "They needed a roof, their air conditioning and heating system blew up, and then their sewer line clogged. We figured we'd help them out with a free roof."

The 65-year-old Nanticoke man owns Shonk Roofing and Construction, also in Nanticoke. He lived in New Jersey for 14 years, but spent most of his life in the Wyoming Valley. Shonk, a Plymouth native and Larksville High School graduate, started his career as a roofer when he was 24 years old.

"I've done hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of roofs since then, and repaired more," he said.

The old American Legion roof was at least 30 years old, and the building, located on Center Avenue, is 10 to 20 years older, Shonk said. He offered his time and crew at no cost, as long as the legion members could pick up the cost of materials.

"They absolutely needed a new roof," he said. "No doubt about it."

Shonk estimated the roof's cost at \$20,000, including the cost of two weeks' labor, but that is a small amount compared to the sacrifices the veterans of Post 463 made, he said.

Shonk's efforts did not go unnoticed by the legion members.

"With the economy being that it is, Bob is struggling to stay afloat himself, yet he donated his time to help the veterans," said Clarence Hopkins, a Post 463 member and Vietnam War veteran. "He is married and has a family to feed and provide for. Bob is not a veteran, but cares about us that served."

Shonk said he just saw an opportunity to help the veterans, although he refers to them as his "good friends."

"Oh, they were up against it, with their heat and air conditioning gone and their sewer line clogged," Shonk said. "Who wouldn't help their friends? We figured we would."

11/13/2009

## **GNA School Board selects new member**

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Ryan Verazin will be sworn in today or Saturday as the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board's newest member after he was unanimously appointed Thursday to fill the remaining two years of Pattie Bieski's term.

Bieski resigned Oct. 15, and the board had 30 days to fill the seat. Seven people submitted applications. Board President Bob Raineri said the decision was extremely difficult and hoped there would be no hard feelings.

Verazin, 28, who will have his first meeting as a board member in December, has until Nov. 15 to be sworn in.

"I'm very honored and very humbled you all put your faith in me," he said.

Board member Cindy Donlin nominated Verazin; Jeff Kozlofski seconded the nomination. Board member Gary Smith was absent. Raineri and Smith were reappointed to three more years on the joint operating committee that governs the Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center.

Albert B. Melone Co., of Pittston, was reappointed as the district's business consultants for the next three years, with a base fee of \$72,930 that will increase annually according to the cost of living index provided by the state.

Greater Nanticoke will be updating the computers in the Elementary Center by paying a buyout of \$3,000 to keep some equipment, and will enter a three-year contract with HP/Compaq worth \$136,000 to purchase 160 machines.

Students in third, fourth and fifth grades will have the opportunity to receive a free H1N1 vaccine tomorrow as the district continues to give out vaccines it received from the state. Younger students were vaccinated last week and early this week. The vaccines are voluntary.

Attendance rates, which are one way for school officials to gauge if H1N1 or another illness is spreading through the district, are improving. Superintendent Tony Perrone said 95 percent of students were in class Thursday.

New hires include Geraldine Hill as a seven-hour cafeteria worker and Eugene Labenski and Scott Granoski as crossing guards.

The district is also collecting for its annual holiday drive, which Perrone said is going well. The district received an unexpected \$500 anonymous donation on top of other fundraising efforts. The money goes toward providing toys and food to district families during the holidays.

11/13/2009

## **GNA gives nod to 28-year-old**

### **Ryan Verazin, a district graduate, will serve as school board member through 2011.**

slong@timesleader.com

District alumnus Ryan Verazin has been chosen to become the newest member of the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board.

Verazin was appointed Thursday night during a monthly board meeting after Director Cindy Donlin made the nomination and it was seconded by Director Jeff Kozlofski. The board vote was unanimous with member Gary Smith absent.

Board President Bob Raineri told those attending the meeting the board had seven qualified, good applicants from which to choose.

"It was very difficult to pick. We know everyone. There are no hard feelings from anyone on this board to those that weren't chosen. It was very difficult," Raineri said.

Verazin, 28, is filling the unexpired term of former Director Patti Bieski, who resigned Oct. 15 because she moved out of the district. His term will run through December 2011.

Other applicants considered were Betsy Cheshinski, Marilyn Collacchi, Dave Hornlein Jr., Karen Metta, Sandy Sadowski and James Samselski.

Verazin, a 1999 GNA graduate who went on to earn a degree from King's College in 2003, accepted the appointment with his wife, Elizabeth, and 4-month-old daughter, Haley, at his side. He was not sworn-in Thursday but will be within the next few days.

"I am very honored and humbled that you put your faith in me. I will not let any of you down. I will not let the students down. I will not let the taxpayers down and I will not let the teachers down as much as I possibly can," he said.

Verazin's appointment will continue helping the district move in a new direction, Director Frank Vandermark said.

"We are trying to move forward and get a new, younger modern voice on the board. We are trying to get some fresh faces and new ideas," Vandermark said.

Vandermark also echoed what Raineri said earlier in the evening that all the candidates were "excellent" choices,



making the decision hard, but he felt Verazin's youth worked to his advantage.

Verazin will be the youngest member of the board.

He thinks his youth will work to the entire district's benefit.

"I am thinking my age will possibly help keep the board a little bit more up to date on what is really going on in the colleges. I know what the colleges are expecting of students. I know what corporate America is expecting of the students, so I think I can give them some younger insight of what is going on now," Verazin said.

Verazin loves biology and the sciences.

11/12/2009

### **Nanticoke goes online to sell**

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The city is getting innovative in selling surplus vehicles and other equipment by taking it all online.

The city joined [Municibid](#), an eBay style auction Web site, less than a month ago to sell a fire truck and snow plow/street department truck that the city no longer needs.

City Administrator Holly Quinn said utilizing the Internet to sell extra equipment just makes sense because the site will reach people across the nation and possibly the world, instead of reaching just a local readership asking for bidders in a newspaper ad. The city paid a flat fee of \$200 for an annual membership.

"It's really cost-effective. It is just as much as one advertisement in the newspaper and it will give us a year of service," Quinn said.

Auctions on Municibid work a lot like an eBay account, Quinn said. She can post details of the products and pictures, give as much of a description as needed and set a minimum amount for the bids.

The city's previous snow plow truck, a 1995 Chevrolet 4x4 pickup, was posted online on Nov. 3. There have been no bids received yet.

Street Department Supervisor Wally Pavelitz has received several calls from people interested in inspecting the truck. "It's been viewed 353 times and I know Wally has been making appointments for people to come down and check out the vehicle," Quinn said.

The 1977 Hahn Fire Truck was posted on the auction site Wednesday afternoon and will run for seven days.

The city is asking for at least a \$1,000 for the truck.

Quinn expressed expectations that the city will have a much better chance to sell the fire truck than when the city requested bids in May. There were no bids received at that time.

The city purchased another pickup earlier this year to replace the 1995 Chevy and the volunteer fire companies are donating money to purchase a new fire engine.

All proceeds from the sales on the Web site will go directly into the city's capital projects fund to make improvements or purchase future equipment, Quinn said.

11/12/2009

### **Seven seeking appointment to Nanticoke Area School Board**

#### **School directors are expected to make decision tonight**

slong@timesleader.com

Seven people, including two candidates from the May primaries, are vying for an open seat on the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board after a board member resigned last month.

Betsy Cheshinski, Marilyn Collacchi, Dave Hornlein Jr., Karen Metta, Sandy Sadowski, James Samselski and Ryan Verazin all submitted letters of intent to fill former board member Patti Bieski's seat, which runs through December 2011.

Board President Bob Raineri confirmed all seven applicants submitted letters of intent, and he expected the school board to vote on selecting a new board member during tonight's meeting.

One candidate served on the board previously. Two other candidates sought seats earlier this year, and there is also a community advocate looking for his first elected seat.

Metta, a retired teacher and Sadowski, a community watchdog, ran unsuccessfully in the May primaries.

Metta, 61, retired in 2005 after 34 years in the district, where she worked primarily as an art teacher. She said her experience and familiarity with the district will help her serve the residents, as she feels the board is moving in the right direction.

She praised the current board for keeping the district financially sound, making process on course selections, technology offerings.

“It’s running well and I would like to help keep it running that way,” said Metta, whose husband, Jon, is a city council member and previously worked for the district as a grants coordinator. They have two children who have graduated from Greater Nanticoke Area already and their youngest child is a sophomore.

“I think all the children in Nanticoke should get an education just like my grandchildren are getting (in Maryland),” Sadowski said. “Nanticoke has a lot of problems and is not willing to face up to it,” she said.

Sadowski, 66, believes Metta should get the seat because she ran and she was the next highest vote getter not to get elected.

Hornlein, 41, thinks his previous experience as a school board member from 2004-07 will benefit him if he is selected to serve again. He said he enjoyed serving on the board and would like to help lead the district again.

“As a board member you can’t just have one goal. You need to take in everything that is going on around you and adjust with the times,” said Hornlein, who also serves on the board of directors for the New Horizons Development Foundation, an affiliate of the Nanticoke Housing Authority.

Samselski, a community advocate, routinely attends city council and school board meetings.

All of Samselski’s children have graduated, but he remains an active community advocate who works with children as vice-president of the city’s recreation board.

“I thought I could help out being that I am around the kids. I know their concerns, needs and abilities and how to play on things like that. When you know what is going on in town, it is easier to help out,” said Samselski, 47.

Verazin, 28, considered running for a seat on the board during the May primaries, but then changed his plans after his wife became pregnant.

Verazin works in the pharmaceutical industry in vaccine development and wants to use this background to help increase offerings in the district’s biological and health science classes.

“I would like to jump on their team and get my feet wet and possibly look into increasing the health sciences area,” he said.

Collacchi’s love of children prompted her to seek a seat on the board, as she is a Sunday school teacher at Holy Trinity in Nanticoke.

Collacchi, 61, knows the district is on the right track and says if selected she wants to help fellow board members continue offering the gifted programs, special SAT and PSSA tutoring sessions and special programs to help special needs children.

“I just felt like being part of the team for school directors to continue helping them. I was interested in working with the children and for the taxpayers to make sure the taxes don’t go sky high,” said Collacchi, who ran against Al Wytoshek for city treasurer many years ago. She lost that election.

Collacchi, who is the sister of Jean Ditzler, a member and acting executive director of the Nanticoke Housing Authority, also teaches Sunday school at Holy Trinity Church.

Cheshinski, 52, works for the city of Nanticoke and has served as city clerk for the council for the last year. She said she’s learned a lot as city clerk and now wants to have a voice to communicate with district parents.

“I just feel the school is the children’s second home. I think a lot of that is lost that we even have to teach parents to get more active in their child’s education,” Cheshinski said.

If you go:

Greater Nanticoke Area School Board meeting at 7 tonight at Nanticoke Area High School, 425 Kosciuszko St.

11/8/2009

**Nanticoke ordinance to muzzle bothersome pets**

slong@timesleader.com

Loud animals in the city now could cost their owners a fine.

An ordinance passed last week will penalize pet owners if their non-human friends are excessively loud and disturb other resident.

Any pet owner whose animal violates the ordinance will be subject to a fine of up to \$1,000.

| Councilman Joe Dougherty said he and his colleagues began discussing ideas for such an ordinance after receiving complaints from residents throughout the city.

This ordinance enables city officials to better “provide for the greater control and more effective regulation of excessive sound and the sources of excessive sound,” according to the ordinance text.

The animal, regardless of type, will be considered a nuisance if it makes unreasonable noise continuously for 30 minutes or for every few minutes for an hour or more.

There are exceptions to the ordinance, though.

The disturbance will not be considered a nuisance if the animal is making noise to protect private property or itself from someone who might be provoking the animal, the ordinance states.

This ordinance will not apply to farms with farm animals.

11/7/2009

### **Nanticoke Area offers vaccine**

#### **The district wants to protect students from a swine flu epidemic in its schools.**

slong@timesleader.com

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District began providing free H1N1 vaccine Friday to its students in an attempt to ward off a major swine flu outbreak.

“In other countries we see people with masks on and we are wondering, is it really that bad? I really don’t know. I hope Americans aren’t taking this lightly. Experts say the real season is supposed to come in November and December. All we can do is make it available and then it is up to parents,” Superintendent Tony Perrone said as he explained what prompted him to work with district Head Nurse Sandy Najaka to offer these free clinics.

Shots and nasal spray vaccines were given to 200 out of the district’s 370 pre-schoolers, kindergarteners and first graders at the district’s K.M. Smith Elementary School in Sheatown, Perrone said.

He expects students in the second grade to get the vaccine on either Monday or Tuesday. Students in the higher grades will get the vaccine as more doses arrive. All students are eligible to receive the vaccine if their parents sign an authorization form.

Earlier this week, thousands of swine flu vaccines had to be discarded by the Stroudsburg Area School District in Monroe County when they were stored at too cold of a temperature. That caused the vaccines to become ineffective.

Vaccines administered by the Nanticoke Area’s nurses arrived eight days ago. The first batch of 600 vaccines were stored at the proper temperature until they could be given, Perrone said.

More vaccine is expected to arrive within the next week.

Nanticoke Area appears to be the only district in Luzerne County currently offering swine flu vaccines.

“We were lucky. The first time we applied for it, we got it. I don’t think any of the other schools are doing it right now,” Perrone said.

The Dallas School District submitted paperwork earlier this week to the state’s Department of Health to apply to become a certified vaccination site, district Nurse Laura O’Malley said. It is unknown when it will learn a decision will be made.

Pittston Area, which was hit heavy by a swine flu outbreak earlier this fall, is not applying to become a vaccine site.

Other district superintendents could not be reached for comment.

Department of Health spokeswoman Stacy Kriedeman could not confirm which districts have been designated as vaccine sites, but said 150 districts statewide have received vaccine doses.

State statistics show 171 Luzerne County residents are confirmed to have contracted the swine flu as of Friday morning, according to the Department of Health’s Web site. State officials said no one locally has died from swine flu.

11/7/2009

### **Lou Cella won’t be back to coach in 2010**

Times Leader

Nanticoke Area football coach Lou Cella announced Friday that he will not return as coach for the 2010 season.

Cella did not coach the Trojans this season after suffering a heart attack during the offseason.

“I have discussed my recent health issues with my physicians and have decided not to return as head varsity football coach at Greater Nanticoke Area High School in 2010,” Cella said in an e-mail sent to the media Friday night.

“I have always stressed to my students and athletes that it is important to invest 100 percent into everything that is important to them,” Cella continued in the e-mail. “Due to my involvement in cardiac rehabilitation, vascular education classes, and nutritional meetings, I now have to dedicate substantial time to my health.”

Cella coached Nanticoke for one season – 2008. He was replaced on the sidelines this season by his brother, Mario.

11/5/2009

**Nanticoke may put own home rule study to vote**

Robert Olsen - Citizens' Voice

Council members discussed a proposed ordinance Wednesday that would place a question on the May 2010 ballot regarding the formation of a government study commission to explore the adoption of a city home rule charter.

"Why do we need a commission for that?" Nanticoke Mayor John Bushko asked Solicitor William T. Finnegan. "(Home Rule) is already spelled out."

"It's the law," Finnegan said. "There are certain steps you have to go through (when exploring the adoption of home rule) and this is one of the steps."

According to Finnegan, the study commission can be comprised of seven, nine or 11 members. Finnegan suggested selecting a board of seven members.

Residents asked what qualifications a person must have to be on the commission.

"Anybody could run," Finnegan said. "You have to run to be on the commission."

According to Finnegan, to run for the commission, a resident must be a registered voter. Party affiliation is not a consideration.

Finnegan said he would begin working on the ordinance and advertising for it.

In other business, council approved a motion to submit an application for the municipal building to act as a designated Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly program site.

Pam Heard, the city's new finance director, will oversee the program as well as the recruitment of volunteers.

According to Heard, she has years of tax preparation experience and is excited to have the opportunity to help the city's elderly residents.

Bushko said all of Heard's time working on the project would not be on the city clock.

According to Heard, those who meet certain conditions will be eligible for free tax return preparation. More details will be available at upcoming council meetings.

Council also approved a motion to pay city bills totaling \$286,410.96.

On the left:

A demolition project is under way in downtown Nanticoke. The old Susquehanna Coal Co. office and former senior center are being razed this week to make way for LCCC's new culinary arts center.

11/5/2009

**Nanticoke defends managers**

**Mayor said finance director, city administrator are doing good job balancing budget.**

slong@timesleader.com

City council members had just barely a quorum Wednesday night, yet they had a lively meeting that centered on money and employment issues.

Council members unanimously approved an employment agreement with city Finance Director Pamela Heard after city Treasurer Al Wytoshek asked a series of questions regarding Heard's salary and benefits.

"It's our money, and I just want to know how it is being spent. I think the salaries and benefits are excessive. We are spending this type of money, but I don't see us getting anything in return," Wytoshek said.

Mayor John Bushko sarcastically asked him if he thought it was a waste of money.

Wytoshek said he wasn't against Heard personally, but he wanted to know exactly how the city's money was being spent.

"Go look at what she does in the office. &hellip; They (Heard and City Administrator Holly Quinn) are balancing the budget, doing everything to cut costs and bring everything down to where we can afford to have police officers and fire (fighters).

"What do you want us to do? What are we missing?" Bushko asked.

Wytoshek did not offer any specifics.

Bushko went on to point out the city interviewed other less qualified candidates for the finance director job, who wanted \$50,000 or more to perform the job.

Heard works as an adjunct faculty member at the Luzerne County Community College and previously worked for the Al Melone CPA firm.

Councilman Jon Metta, who oversees the finance department, believes Heard has proven she is worth the salary and benefits she is paid.

"She is getting her feet wet. She is getting a lot of things under her belt and I see very good progress," he said.

Heard works under an employment agreement because she is not a member of a union, so she is not covered under a contract.

The agreement states Heard, who started on Aug. 5, will be paid \$45,000 per year with the eligibility to receive future pay raises based on merit.

She receives health benefits, paid holidays, 10 paid vacation days a year, has a 35-hour work week – including attending council meetings.

If she works more than 35 hours in a week, she is entitled to compensatory time.

Heard is enrolled in the city's non-uniform city retirement plan, in which she will be vested after 10 years of service. If she or the city terminate her employment, there must be a 15-day notice.

Wytoshek does not get to vote on any council issues.

In other business, Bushko made a motion to reappoint Ron Kile to the Nanticoke Recreation Board. His term will run from this year to June 2013.

Nanticoke Municipal Authority member Hank Marks asked the council to consider appointing a new member to the municipal authority after another recent resignation.

Council members Brent Makarczyk and James Litchkofski were absent from Wednesday's meeting.

11/3/2009

### **Demolishing the old for a new Nanticoke**

### **Downtown buildings begin to fall to make room for LCCC's Culinary Arts Institute.**

slong@timesleader.com

The city's downtown is undergoing a major transformation – one that has been in the planning stages for at least the last three years.



The former Nanticoke Senior Citizens building is torn down on the corner of Market and Main streets in Nanticoke on Monday morning. The former Susquehanna Coal building is also slated to be razed  
s. john wilkin/the times leader

Select images available for purchase in the [Times Leader Photo Store](#)

Two long-standing iconic buildings began to fall Monday morning as demolition employees from Grinnell Recycling of Sparta, N.J., arrived to begin making room for the Luzerne County Community College's Culinary Arts Institute.

Developer Mark Construction of Moosic will build the nearly 22,000-square-foot building and then the college will purchase the building for \$3.128 million. Demolition crews started tearing down the former Senior Citizens Center, once owned by the city, on the corner of Main and Market streets. Construction crews will also tear down the Susquehanna Coal Building once owned by the Nanticoke Housing Authority, on West Main Street and Nanticoke Avenue. Both buildings are surrounded by a chain-link fence to keep onlookers from getting too close. Nanticoke Avenue has been cordoned off for about one block behind the old coal company headquarters to Nanticoke Avenue and Coal Street. All this work is seen as a positive step to state, LCCC and city officials because to them it signals that Nanticoke is heading toward a rebirth.

State Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, has long been a proponent and driving force to get two of the college's major programs into the downtown. LCCC's Health Sciences Program is slated to move into the former Kanjorski Center on Main Street in the spring of 2011. Internal demolition of that building will begin soon, because a contract was awarded last week to Empire Services for \$122,300.

"I feel inspired by the residents of the South Valley and all the community leaders who shared our vision for a new downtown Nanticoke," he said.

The projects did not come without their hurdles. Announcements for LCCC's move into downtown were made more than two years ago, with the original time frame of starting classes this fall.

"Projects of this magnitude, nearly a \$30 million investment in Nanticoke, always face certain challenges. ... No hurdle proved insurmountable and the progress we planned for is being delivered," Yudichak said.

As vice president of LCCC's training institutes, external affairs and planning, Joe Grilli oversees all the college's renovation, expansion and new construction projects.

Echoing Yudichak's comments, he said he never doubted the project would move forward.

The Culinary Arts Institute will be constructed to strict Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification guidelines to make the two-story building as energy efficient as possible.

The Culinary Institute will not be on the tax rolls, but City Administrator Holly Quinn said the city will gain something even better after the building opens for classes in the fall of 2010.

"The Culinary Arts Institute is going to host approximately, every day, 250 staff members, faculty and students when they open. That is 250 more people that will be walking around downtown Nanticoke every day. They are going to be eating in our restaurants and shopping in downtown."

She said she doesn't know exactly what the economic impact will be, but noted it will represent an improvement.

11/2/2009

### **Man's best friend a future crime-fighter Vice in training to detect illegal drugs**

slong@timesleader.com

**The city's newest officer has biting abilities, four legs and a tail.** Officer Brian Kivler and his new K-9 partner, Vice, of the Nanticoke Police Department. Vice will be used to detect illegal substances and track missing people.

Don Carey/The Times Leader

Select images available for purchase in the

[Times Leader](#) Photo Store

But don't let that fool you – Vice, a 20-month-old German Shepherd, is not a warm and cuddly puppy. The four-legged furry officer arrived Oct. 20 and immediately began

training locally with his human partner so that they can work together.

Vice is being put through his paces with his handler, Nanticoke police officer Brian Kivler, to learn to detect illegal drugs, track a lost person, search properties and do routine patrol work.

The dog's status in the police department is no tall tale, either. He is a full-time officer, with his own badge -- number 9072 ?. If anyone attempts to harm or kill Vice, they can be prosecuted on a felony charge, Kivler said.

City and school district officials hope Vice will deter drug dealers from entering town and discourage residents from

using or purchasing illegal substances.

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District paid \$5,500 to purchase the dog for the department, with the understanding that the dog will be brought onto campuses to do occasional locker searches.

The Nanticoke Housing Authority gave the district a \$500 check as a contribution toward the K9 unit's cost, interim executive director and board member Jean Ditzler said. The city is covering Vice's food costs.

GNA Superintendent Tony Perrone said the district and the police department have a great working relationship and he believes Vice could just be an added deterrent to students thinking about bringing drugs on campus.

"Every school and every community has a need for something like that. ... We are going to make sure he is present here at least once a week. Kids will not know when he is coming and we will hopefully be able to keep drugs out of the school," he said.

Vice and Kivler will not patrol the schools alone. A district or school administrator will accompany the duo. If Vice alerts to a particular area noting drugs might be present, the school official will be able to open lockers so officers can search for any narcotics.

Perrone said he also thinks it's important for the younger students to be exposed to Vice, adding that he will be serving the community for up to 10 years.

But the department is going to wait until training is fully completed, which might take about two months, before deciding on whether to expose Vice to the district's younger students, Nanticoke Detective Bill Shultz said.

Kivler said he anticipates that after training Vice could perform demonstrations for the younger students.

He and Shultz emphasize Vice is not being trained to act as a therapy dog, but rather to protect Kivler and track drugs and missing people. The officers want people to know that when they see Vice they should not run up to pet or try to play with him because Vice could interpret that as a threat.

Nanticoke Mayor John Bushko said that Vice, with his superior sense of smell, will be a vital part of police drug busts.

"I think the dog is a big asset. He'll sniff it out in a minute. It will help make the cops' job much easier," Bushko said.

Also, with Nanticoke's large population of older adults, with three nursing homes inside the city limits, Vice's ability to track a lost person will come in handy if someone with Alzheimer's wanders away and becomes lost.

10/30/2009

### **Nanticoke revitalization effort officially under way Monday**

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After months of planning and preparing, downtown Nanticoke's transformation begins Monday.

The key to the more than \$24 million revitalization plan is Luzerne County Community College's growth and expansion onto Main Street, with a new health sciences center to be housed in the former Kanjorski Center and a Culinary Arts Institute to be built at Market and Main. LCCC officials' goal is to have both facilities ready for classes by January 2011.

To make way for the culinary school, the former Susquehanna Coal Co. office and the old senior center are scheduled to be torn down starting at 9 a.m. Monday.

Joe Boylan, chief of staff for state Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, has good news for those who don't want to see the historic building completely demolished: he said the facade and main entrance will be spared and incorporated into the new culinary arts facility.

"At least there will be some remembrance of the building," Boylan said.

He said work on the health sciences center should also begin any day. LCCC's board of trustees recently awarded a \$122,300 bid to Empire Services to prepare the interior of the Kanjorski Center for remodeling.

"It's the beginning of a new era for Nanticoke's downtown," Councilman Joseph Dougherty said.

The transformation is expected to get another bump in the spring, with the start of the other major downtown improvements: streetscaping of Main, Market, and Prospect streets, creation of the Lower Broadway Park, and the facade program.

Last week, Nanticoke council held a special session for business owners and residents to give input on a program that would allow Main Street property owners to fix up their buildings, and have the state pay for at least half. Eligible improvements include signs, painting and storefront renovations.

"I've been getting phone calls all week. I was so excited at the response to our public meeting," city Administrator Holly Quinn said. "We want to create a new image for the city's commercial district."

She is currently working on obtaining a grant of \$30,000 from the state, to be matched with \$30,000 from the city, which came from the sale of the former senior center to the culinary arts institute developer, William Rinaldi of

Scranton.

The \$5.6 million streetscaping project is in the engineering phase, Quinn said. It will include new streetlights, sidewalks and greenery.

When the street improvements are being made in the spring, if a grant from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources comes through as expected, work should also begin on the Lower Broadway Park at North Market and Lower Broadway streets, Boylan said.

The first phase of the park would include cleaning and greening up the property and taking care of stormwater runoff issues, he said. And - if the funding can be obtained - construction of the long-awaited skateboard park can start, too.

"We want to see, within the next 12 months, all construction done down there," Boylan said, noting that it is good to see the projects come to fruition.

"It looks like we're getting there. It's exciting," he said.

10/28/2009

### **Greater Nanticoke Area pegged for H1N1 vaccination site**

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H1N1 vaccines will be available at [Greater Nanticoke Area, a school district](#) official said Tuesday.

It is not yet known when the vaccines will arrive and be given out, Superintendent Tony Perrone said, but phone messages and information packets for parents are being prepared and will be sent out this week.

"I guess it's for the kids and staff that are directly working with the kids - like the nurses," he said.

Perrone would not say how many vaccines the district has requested from the state. They requested some live-virus nasal vaccines, but mostly shot vaccines.

Nanticoke, like all other schools following state orders, is monitoring absentee rates. As of Tuesday, 12 percent to 13 percent of students were not in class, Perrone said.

As many doctors, hospitals, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta are not testing all patients who demonstrate flu-like symptoms for H1N1, schools are advised to use absentee rates as an indication of overall student body health.

Absentee rates at Pittston Area School District are returning to normal after H1N1 illness and fears kept a quarter of students out of class and shut down the school almost three weeks ago.

District-wide Tuesday, Superintendent George Cosgrove reported 5.9 percent of students did not attend class. Typical absentee rates range from 4 percent to 6 percent.

At Hanover Area School District, where absentee rates hovered near 20 percent last week, 11 percent of students were absent Tuesday, Superintendent Anthony Podczasy said.

Similarly, absenteeism appears to be decreasing at Wilkes-Barre Area School District. Absences peaked around Oct. 19, and as of Tuesday were down to about 770 students, or about 12 percent of the population. However, the number of students leaving school early because of illness is increasing slightly, Superintendent Jeffrey Namey said.

Dallas reported approximately 10 percent of students were absent Friday. Superintendent Frank Galicki said the school district, like Greater Nanticoke Area, has applied to be a vaccination site but has not yet heard from the Department of Health.

Crestwood's attendance rate ranged from 95 percent to 80 percent so far this week, Superintendent Dave McLaughlin-Smith said.

Some 1,200 students stayed home from school in the Hazleton Area School District last Friday, according to attendance numbers provided by Superintendent Sam Marolo.

Attendance has been up and down, he said, and absenteeism is holding at about 8 percent, a number far below the 30 percent that would cause concern.

And there have been no confirmed cases of swine flu, Marolo said.

"The Department of Health is treating all flu cases as if it's the H1N1," he said, adding that the district is taking precautions, such as wiping down classrooms and buses to control the spread of the flu.

10/23/2009

### **Nanticoke finances are improving**

**Audit shows that 'fund balance is going in the right direction,' accountant says.**

slong@timesleader.com



The city's finances are steadily improving, city council members learned during Wednesday night's council meeting. It was just one of the many topics discussed.

Accountant Joe Aliciene Jr. presented his findings of the 2008 city audit, stating the "fund balance is going in the right direction."

The city showed in paperwork presented to Aliciene's firm that the city's assets exceeded the liabilities by \$1.1 million in 2007, compared to \$1.97 million in 2008. That was substantially more than the same time frame between 2006 and 2007 when the assets exceeded liabilities by only \$170,000.

Council also learned that work should begin on paving three streets – West Church, West Ridge and West Noble – within the next two weeks, according to engineer Darryl Pawlush of the Pasonick Engineering firm.

Pawlush will meet with the company officials in a pre-work conference on Oct. 29 to go over any final project details. Popple Construction of Laflin was awarded the bid when it submitted the lowest bid of \$294,343. Three other companies submitted bids.

Other companies that submitted the proposals were Pikes Creek Site Contractors with a bid of \$349,330, Slusser Brothers of Harrisburg with a bid of \$321,924 and Robert Young Inc. with a bid of \$355,843.

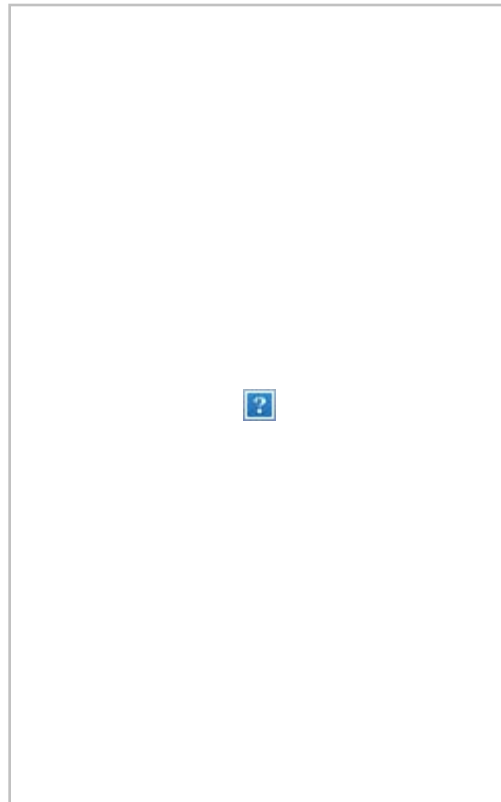
This project is being paid using \$280,000 the city received from the state's Community Development Block Grants and \$90,000 from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

Work must be completed by Dec. 1 per the agreement the city issued in the bids.

Pawlush said since there will be money left over additional portions of West Church or West Ridge streets can be paved now or the money can be used next year on another street.

The council unanimously also approved hiring the bidders that submitted proposals for snow plow work. Bids were received from Doug Sorber of Shickshinny at \$60 per hour, Paul Zaltewiz of Nanticoke for \$65 per hour and CPS Direct of Nanticoke for \$80 per hour. This work would be paid on an as-needed basis and all three would be called on a rotating basis. Last winter, the city also used CPS Direct, which uses a dump truck to plow the streets.

10/22/2009 - Citizens Voice



10/22/2009

**Downtown Nanticoke to vie for face-lift funds**

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The owners of Main Street businesses may soon be sprucing up their properties, with a little help from the city and the

state.

City council on Wednesday authorized a funding proposal to the state Department of Community and Economic Development for \$30,000 to assist in facade improvements to the businesses on Main Street.

Once the funding is secured, business owners will be able to apply to a design committee and, upon approval, will receive matching grants to enhance their storefronts, said City Administrator Holly Quinn.

"(The project) would foster an attractive shopping environment and walking district throughout the city," Quinn said. The six-member design committee will include city representatives, business and property owners and concerned citizens, and work directly with the Main Street business owners. If a project is approved, the property owners would receive matching funds from the city and state.

Eligible costs for reimbursement will include sign and paint programs, design assistance and storefront facades, city officials said.

Quinn said the facade improvements would start early next year, once funding is approved. If there is money left over, city officials may make funding available to businesses on other streets, she said.

The project will tie into the city's streetscape revitalization project on Main Street, scheduled to start in the spring. The city received a \$5.6 million grant for downtown streetscape work.

In other matters, city auditor Joseph R. Aliciene Jr. presented the 2008 single audit report. He said the city decreased its general fund deficit from about \$503,000 at the beginning of 2008 to \$154,149 at the end of the fiscal year.

"The fund balance seems to be going in the right direction," Aliciene said.

In other business, council:

n Awarded a \$294,342.60 contract to Popple Construction to pave West Church, West Ridge and West Noble streets. The city received about \$370,000 in stimulus funding and a Community Development Block Grant. The paving project is expected to begin as early as next week and should be completed by Dec. 1.

n Is considering selling a city-owned vacant lot at 415 E. Washington St., pending an appraisal. Solicitor William T. Finnegan Jr. said a neighbor of the property is interested in purchasing it.

n Approved a pay rate of \$10 per hour for newly hired part-time officers. The city is looking to hire both part-time and full-time officers, Quinn said.

10/21/2009

### **Concern about swine flu leads to restrictions**

#### **Hospitals tighten visitation policies**

slong@timesleader.com

Two area hospitals are tightening visitation policies in an effort to keep patients from contracting the H1N1 virus, also referred to as swine flu, from visitors.

The Wyoming Valley Health Care System and Mercy Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke have implemented strict policies to be in force throughout the flu season. The policies are effective immediately.

The Veterans Affairs Medical Center and Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center have not changed their visitation criteria but are monitoring issues closely.

WVHC system's new visitation policies will be in effect at all its facilities – Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, First Hospital Wyoming Valley and Heritage House, a nursing care facility, on Northampton Street in Wilkes-Barre.

The new visitation policy prohibits anyone under the age of 18 or anyone suffering from a cold, fever or respiratory illness from visiting any patients. Only immediate family will be allowed to see patients in the obstetrics, pediatric or certain care units – critical care unit, surgical intensive care unit, cardiac-thoracic intensive care unit and cardiac step-down unit.

WVHC system's Chief Executive Officer Cornelio Catena said he realized this might cause an inconvenience for some families, but the health of the patients is the system's primary concern.

"As caregivers, however, it's our responsibility to protect our patients and advocate for their safety while they're in our care," Catena said.

Mercy Special Care Hospital Chief Executive Officer Bob Williams said his facility had similar guidelines: No one under 18 or people suffering from flu-like symptoms will be allowed to visit.

VA Executive Director Vince Riccardo said swine flu is a "very sensitive and concerning issue" that's being assessed.

10/19/2009

### **Family of late firefighter creates scholarship**

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2055

H. Robert "Moe" Bray was a fixture in the Nanticoke Fire Department for nearly six decades until his death earlier this year at age 86.

His family wants his legacy to live on through a permanent scholarship in his name.

After his death in February, Bray's family directed contributions to a memorial account and enough generous donations were made to create a scholarship fund. Each year, the scholarship will be awarded to a volunteer Nanticoke firefighter who is in college.

The first scholarship of \$500 was handed out in September to Kevin Hazleton Jr., whose father is also a Nanticoke firefighter. Hazleton Jr. is a third-year student at Penn State University, studying nuclear engineering.

"Volunteers don't get compensated. There's a lot of time and energy they put in. Our family is just trying to be a small part in assisting them," said Bray's son, Bob Bray. "It's the intent of the family to keep this going indefinitely. We want to perpetuate his memory for as long as we can. It helps our family by keeping his memory alive."

Bray served the city fire department for 57 years, with 37 years of them as a paid union driver. He retired from full-time, paid service in 1987, but continued to support the department through volunteer and administrative duties for years to come.

"His passion, other than his family, was the fire department," Bob Bray said.

Nanticoke fire Chief Mike Bohan saluted Bray's service and said the scholarship is a good way to reward and attract volunteers.

"You don't see years of service like that anymore," Bohan said of Bray's time in the fire department.

Bray's family wanted to make the public aware of the scholarship in hopes donations could keep the scholarship fund healthy for years to come. They would like to either increase the amount or issue multiple scholarships for future years.

"The more money we get, the more we can give out," Bob Bray said.

The scholarship is not given as a check to the firefighters, but is sent directly to the educational institution of the recipient, Bob Bray said.

Bob Bray said the family is committed to the long-term existence of the fund.

"As long we can continue to do it, we will. We're looking at this as a win-win situation to memorialize our father and also give something back to the community," he said.

Donations may be sent to:

The H. Robert Bray Memorial Scholarship

c/o Bill Jenkins

672 N. River Road

Suite 300

Plains Township, PA 18705

10/16/2009

**Patti Bieski resigns seat on GNA School Board**

**Twelve-year-member leaves post after moving out of district's boundaries.**

slong@timesleader.com

Patti Bieski, a Greater Nanticoke Area School Board member, resigned from her post Thursday night during the monthly school board meeting with a heavy heart.

She said it was hard to leave, but she has to follow the law that states board members must live within the district's boundaries.

Bieski recently moved out of the district, so that makes her ineligible to continue serving on the board as she has done for the last 12 years.

She expressed sorrow at leaving because her heart remains with the students, staff members and fellow board members. Bieski's current term will end in December 2011.

"I ran because of the kids. My first thing is the kids. I wish I still lived in the district cause I know I was just a little tiny, tiny piece, a small, small part, but I care so much about Nanticoke," Bieski told the crowd.

None of the other board members wanted to approve her resignation, but they all admitted they knew they had to. It was approved unanimously.

She was an advocate for all the district's children and always tried to see the most optimistic view. She had three children who graduated from Nanticoke Area.

Bieski believes in praising people – especially children – who might need an extra push along the way. “A lot of kids have a lot of problems, but there is very few kids, very few – that don’t have good hearts. Even kids who are troubled,” she said.

The Democrat admitted the district was facing tough times when she was first elected to the board. The board had to shutdown programs, she recalled. Now she is pleased to have been what she calls “a small part” of the board that helped make policies to turn the district around. The district now has a \$4 million fund balance, its test scores are rising and the district is working to implement programs to help students achieve even more.

The board has 30 days to name her replacement.

Anyone interested in serving on the board is asked to submit a letter of interest to Superintendent Tony Perrone’s office. Letters should be submitted within a week, to allow board members to review them and select a new member.

Bieski did not recommend anyone to replace her. She does hope the next board member will keep their focus on the children, too.

It is not supposed to be about the power&hellipI have said it many times we are here first for the kids. Second is the taxpayer we have to be responsible to you guys, but not at the sake of the children,” Bieski said.

10/14/2009

### **At least five probable H1N1 cases reported in Greater Nanticoke Area schools**

Elizabeth Skrapits - Citizens' Voice

Although its cases are unconfirmed, Greater Nanticoke Area might be the second Luzerne County school district hit with swine flu.

Superintendent Anthony Perrone said Tuesday he is aware of five or six potential cases of H1N1 virus, one from each school in the district.

"I didn't see any papers that it was confirmed or anything, but several parents called and said they think their kids have the swine flu," he said.

Perrone said the Greater Nanticoke Area district will not be closed, because students can be exposed to the H1N1 virus anywhere, not just in the schools.

Officials shut down Pittston Area schools on Friday after 20 percent of students were absent on Thursday. There were 12 to 15 doctor-confirmed cases of swine flu in the district. Two cases have also been confirmed at Wyoming Seminary's Lower School, according to President Kip Nygren, who sent an e-mail to parents.

"(We) believe we are appropriately handling these occurrences of flu in the school and attempting to limit the spread of the flu virus. Both of our nurses, Beth Blaum and Maria Coons, and other medical authorities agree that H1N1 flu is to be treated as any type of flu should be treated," Nygren stated in the e-mail.

Luzerne County Community College and Misericordia University have also had H1N1 cases. The latest Pennsylvania Department of Health figures show one probable and 56 confirmed cases of swine flu in Luzerne County. So far there have been no fatalities.

Greater Nanticoke Area "has not reached out to the Department of Health that we know of at this time," said Holly Senior, deputy press secretary for the state agency.

But the district has been proactive, according to Perrone. From the beginning, GNA officials put H1N1 information on the district's Web site, [www.gnasd.com](http://www.gnasd.com), and posted signs in the schools, he said. Officials also sent letters home to parents and asked students to bring their own hand sanitizer to supplement that which is provided by the district, he said. Perrone said GNA officials are telling parents to keep their children home if they are sick.

"We got a letter from Geisinger today asking that we should not demand excuses from kids with swine flu, because it takes their doctors away from their work," he said. "I think the doctors at this point will have their hands full, and if they can see more patients and help more people, that's what it's all about."

Seven Geisinger Health System pediatric clinics in Northeastern Pennsylvania now have the H1N1 vaccine available, spokeswoman Amy Lingobardo said. These include the Kistler Clinic in Wilkes-Barre as well as locations in South Wilkes-Barre, Mountain Top, Hazleton, Nanticoke, Forty Fort and Carbondale.

School districts, including Greater Nanticoke Area, are waiting for some, too.

"We signed up for vaccines. We're willing to offer it in our schools if they choose us," Perrone said.

Denise Allabaugh, staff writer, contributed to this report.

2:16 PM - 10/13/2009

**GNA has a handful of students confirmed with swine flu**

Times Leader.com

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District has between five to six kids absent with the swine flu, according to superintendent Tony Perrone.

Perrone said he got information from the parents this morning and they informed him the children tested positive for H1N1. He has not seen any confirmed reports from the Department of Health.

For more information, read Wednesday's The Times Leader.

10/8/2009

### **Nanticoke may lose some Act 47 funds**

Janine Ungvarsky - Times Leader

The most important discussion of the evening came even before Nanticoke City Council held its meeting Wednesday night, as city officials learned they may soon lose some of the benefits of Act 47 status.

In a short information session before its regular meeting, council heard an update on the status of the state Act 47 financial recovery plan and were informed that state officials intend to phase all cities out of Act 47 within the next two to three years.

The city could lose the ability to levy the 1.5 percent earned income tax (EIT), allowed under Act 47, as soon as next year, officials were told. Options to replace the money that it brought would include increasing property taxes or moving to home rule.

Council members said they hope to know more about the Act 47 phase-out plan within the month and will start investigating options over the next few months.

During the regular meeting, council approved a 90-day experimental parking regulation on Lincoln Street, where parking will be allowed on the east side of the street only.

Council was told the street is so narrow that two cars legally parked on opposite sides of the street effectively block the street. If the temporary regulation works, council said it would consider making it permanent.

In other business, council approved the first reading of an ordinance to vacate part of Arch Street behind the Kanjorski Center to allow for parking. It also awarded the bid for police station driveway rehabilitation to low bidder Lake Construction in the amount of \$57,222 and approved advertising for bids for snowplowing and salting.

10/7/2009

### **Firehouse dalmatian teaches kids about safety**

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

Stop, drop and ... bark.

It's National Fire Prevention Week and the Nanticoke Fire Department has a four-legged friend who will help them spread safety tips to hundreds of youngsters in visits to schools.

Her name is Ember, a 7-year-old dalmatian who lives at the firehouse. Upon command, Ember demonstrates the most basic fire safety technique taught to children: stop, drop and roll.

Throughout this week and the weeks to come, area fire departments will visit local schools to put on fire safety presentations that firefighters hope will result in fewer fires and less injuries or deaths.

Nanticoke firefighters say having a lovable mascot like Ember for assemblies captures the children's attention and makes their message stick.

"You bring a dog on stage and they remember everything," said veteran firefighter Chet Prymowicz.

When a firefighter tells Ember "your fur's on fire," she drops, rolls on her back, and then springs back up on her paws.

Firefighters credit the stop, drop and roll message with saving an 8-year-old city boy's life years ago. The boy lit himself on fire while playing with matches. He rolled on the ground and escaped with moderate injuries.

The boy later told firefighters, "Steamer taught me how to stop, drop and roll," referring to the department's former dalmatian who previously was the main attraction during fire prevention week.

"We were choked up," Prymowicz said.

With a little encouragement, Ember will also demonstrate how to crawl low to the ground. In fires, people are advised to stay low to the ground to consume the cleanest air.

In addition to Ember, the department uses a fire safety house to teach youngsters about fire prevention. It's basically a miniature mobile home trailer that could be filled with simulated smoke to show children what visibility is like in a fire.

The trailer will be on hand at all the school events.

After an instructional period inside the school, firefighters will set up fire hazards in the trailer and allow children inside to find them. They include paper towels located centimeters from stove burners, a newspaper laying by the active fireplace, an extension cord running underneath a carpet and more.

Once the students get in the upstairs bedroom, firefighters release the simulated smoke. At first, smoke billows from under a door. Shortly, the room is filled. After experiencing what it is like, the children are led to a back porch of the trailer and get to use an escape ladder to get to the ground.

"We're not big advocates of just taking them to show them the fire trucks because that's all they'll remember," said fire Chief Mike Bohan. "The kids retain what they learn. You go back year after year to quiz them. We believe the kids are the biggest messengers to parents."

The fire department bought the trailer for \$25,000 years ago with the help of the Kiwanis clubs in Nanticoke, Swoyersville and Tunkhannock. The city fire department's union recently spent \$10,000 in renovations.

Firefighters hope children will remember what they are taught and apply the lessons in their homes.

Firefighter John Polifka said, in addition to the stop, drop and roll message, they will instruct children about the need for fire alarms in every room and that batteries should be checked twice a year. They will be advised about the danger of lighters and matches. He said another important tip for children is to not hide under their beds if a fire breaks out. They should hang a sheet out their window if possible to alert firefighters of a person in the room, Polifka said.

"If one kid's life is saved because of what we teach it's worth it," Prymowicz said.

Prymowicz said firefighters in Nanticoke care deeply about the fire prevention cause. A fatal fire in 1984 placed fire prevention at the forefront, he said.

A 6-year-old girl, a 12-year-old boy and their grandmother perished in a blaze on East Ridge Street and they felt compelled to act. Before that fire, the extent of fire education was a poster contest school children were asked to do, Prymowicz said.

"A couple of us got together afterward and said something needs to be done. That was our wake-up call. We had to do something," Prymowicz said.

10/7/2009

### **Two buildings sold for LCCC project**

### **Proceeds give Nanticoke a financial boost; sale clears way for culinary arts building**

slong@timesleader.com

The sale of two buildings in the southern end of the city's downtown marks progress in the effort to make the Luzerne County Community College's Culinary Arts Institute a reality.

It also brings revenue to two government entities.

Nanticoke received \$250,000 for its Senior Citizens Building at the corner of Main and Market streets and the Nanticoke Housing Authority got \$85,000 for the Susquehanna Coal Building on Main Street from Mark Construction when the sale was concluded Friday afternoon.

The construction firm was hired in mid-September to build the state-of-the art, two-story, 22,000-square-foot building with a cost \$7.5 million. LCCC will pay only \$3,128,000, and the remainder will come from state grant money secured by the developer.

LCCC President Tom Leary expressed his pleasure at seeing the project that has been in the planning stages for more than two years take another step forward.

"This new facility will be an asset to the college as we continue to prepare our students for careers that have been recognized as high demand, both regionally and nationally," Leary said.

He said he expects the Culinary Institute to be ready for classes in the fall of 2010. Another project located just blocks away, the proposed Health Sciences Center, is slated to open in spring 2011 at the former Kanjorski Center.

While increased tax revenue has helped the city with its cash flow in recent months, the proceeds from the sale of the building is a nice amount to add to the city coffers to help fund other projects, city Administrator Holly Quinn said. The money hasn't been earmarked to any particular project.

"It will be used for capital improvements throughout the town, whether its infrastructure or equipment. &hellip;We need to review our capital plan and we do have a 20 percent match for (sewer and road improvements) and streetscape. A portion of this money may be spent on those projects," Quinn said.

She said she also believes this project will help spur additional growth in the downtown and throughout Nanticoke, giving the city a revival.

The housing authority is being reimbursed for the funds it spent when the New Horizons Development Corp., a nonprofit agency founded under the authority's umbrella, sought to turn the former coal company building into apartments, authority solicitor Vito De Luca said.

The funds the housing authority spent came from its operating budget and the money it's receiving from the construction company will be deposited back into the same account, De Luca said.

The money is not earmarked for any particular project, he said.

State Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, has been a longtime supporter of the downtown's revitalization.

Yudichak doesn't have an exact date for when the buildings will be demolished, but he expects it to happen within the next month.

"We are getting to work on building a brand new future for the city of Nanticoke and Luzerne County Community College that will be solidify two projects in our downtown. It will create new jobs and create a new fabric in our downtown," Yudichak said.

10/3/2009

### **Like father, like son: two houses, two sparkling overhauls**

mmcginley@timesleader.com

If Kevin Charnetski wants to see his father, Tony, he doesn't have to go too far.

Once Kevin Charnetski moved into the house next door to his father on East Main Street in Nanticoke, he hired Belles Construction to update it with new siding, pillars and windows. Now the Charnetskis think the home looks more pleasing to the eye.

That's because the men live right next door to each other on East Main Street in Nanticoke after Kevin recently bought a neighboring property – one in which renovation already has been undertaken.

"Everything on the outside of the house, except for six windows, is new," Kevin, 34, said.

Belles Construction Company of Wilkes-Barre remodeled the outside of the home, which was built in 1929, by installing new pillars, energy-efficient windows, light-gray siding and a roof.

"The idea was to fix it up for the community," Kevin, a father of one, said.

And with new energy-efficient windows he's hoping to cut down his monthly heating bill.

"With homes like this, there's no insulation," he said.

Belles also replaced previously decrepit gutters and resurfaced the foundation.

"There was lots of cracking," said Kevin, who estimates the entire process took about two months.

Kevin went with vinyl siding, he said, because it's easy to maintain.

"It's the most practical," Bob Belles Jr. said. "You get the most bang for your buck."

"It holds its color more than the aluminum," Tony added.

He knows a thing or two about that because Belles remodeled the exterior of his home in 2001, expanding the car port, which can cover two cars if appropriately parked, and installing new windows, a roof and white siding.

One thing Tony left the same was the stone on the front of his house.

"That came with the home when we bought it," he said.

"It's a drastic difference," Tony, 70, said, admitting that "we knew basically what we wanted. We haven't had any problems."

Belles expects most of his work this fall to be exterior remodeling, such as windows, siding and roofs, which are especially important to replace when the time comes.

"Sometimes they don't want it, but it has to get done," Belles said.

Fortunately, all Tony expects to do anytime soon is repaint the wrought-iron fence in front of his house.

"We're good for a few more years," he said.

Keeping his home's exterior in tip-top shape is especially important to Tony in part due to a life-size wooden bear that stands in front of the home greeting visitors and catching the eyes of passing drivers.

"It has become a landmark for Nanticoke," Tony said.

9/17/2009

### **Nanticoke approves paving, sewer plans**

### **City Council acts on payments for the three public employee pension funds.**

slong@timesleader.com

City Council's meeting started off on a somber note Wednesday night when Mayor John Bushko asked for a moment of silence for a Nanticoke Housing Authority member who passed away last week.

Housing Authority Commissioner Christina Buttrick died early Saturday after an illness, the mayor said.

During the meeting, Councilman James Litchkofski praised Plymouth Township for its street crew's help in helping the city street crew to repave the extremely bumpy North Market Street going into Honey Pot section of town.

The city's engineer, Darryl Pawlush, of Pasonick Engineering, updated council members on several long-running street improvement projects.

The long-anticipated K-route project, which has been reviewed numerous times over the last four years, will finally move forward as Pennsylvania Department of Transportation approved all plans and will advertise for bids this Friday or by next week at the latest, Pawlush said.

The K-route is a federally funded program because the roads, Alden, Union and Prospect streets, are federal emergency routes out of town. Some of the sewers on the three streets will be replaced and all three will be repaved and resurfaced, City Administrator Holly Quinn said.

"It's a big project and we don't want to jeopardize the project by getting it done too soon. We have worked on it too hard and too long to get it properly engineered and to get it done right," Quinn said as to why the construction will probably not begin until next spring because the city wants to have it done all at the same time.

Other streets that will be repaved include parts of West Noble, West Church and Union using federal stimulus package money. The city is waiting for the state to release the funding.

"We are well prepared. If the governor says spend the funds, we can pave next week," Pawlush said.

Bids will be put out Friday to replace the storm water drains on the ramp that leads to police department in the basement. The drains are not working properly and the ramp is flooding, causing some officers to be injured when tripping due to the flooding or broken pavement around the drains, Quinn said.

"It does pose a danger, especially with winter coming. It is even more dangerous if a vehicle is trying to exit, especially in an emergency," Quinn said. This is a planned budgeted item that will be paid from the city's general fund, she said.

The city also approved its minimum municipal obligation to pay into the city's three pension plans – non-uniform, police and fire. The city will pay \$126,948 in total into the funds to ensure all the city's retirees will be paid properly. The city also receives some state money to pay into the pension funds, but because of the state budget impasse the city has not received its state share of the pension funding.

9/17/2009

### **Nanticoke mulls LED technology**

Robert Olsen - Citizens' Voice

Light-emitting diode technology, according to Nanticoke resident Mark Grabowski, could put the city at the forefront of green technology.

Grabowski questioned council members Wednesday about the possibility of using LED technology in the city's planned downtown streetscaping projects.

Nanticoke "would probably be the first city in Pennsylvania to use the technology," Grabowski said. "Probably even in the Northeast."

Grabowski said he is familiar with the technology from working with it in new flashlights.

"It's very green," Grabowski said. "It also has the potential to be solar."

Mayor John Bushko said all streetscaping plans already incorporate green technology, but that he was interested in more information on the LED technology.

In other business, council members were briefed by Daryl Pawlush of Pasonick Engineering on the status of the anticipated paving of the city's emergency routes, including Alden Road and Union and Prospect streets.

All plans for the paving project have been approved and are waiting to be bid out by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Pawlush said, with bid documentation being prepared sometime next week.

Bushko said the paper work has been in the possession of the state Department of Transportation for almost three months.

Council approved the minimum municipal obligation worksheets for the city's non-uniform, police and fire pension plans in the amount of \$126,947.60.

9/16/2009

### **LCCC tentatively OKs culinary arts deal**



## **Contract details need ironing out before deal finalized for firm to build institute.**

slong@timesleader.com

On Tuesday, the Luzerne County Community College Board of Trustees approved a tentative agreement with developer Mark Construction Services of Moosic to build the Culinary Arts Institute.

The contract is pending approval by LCCC President Tom Leary and college solicitor Joe Kluger once an additional clause clarifying some of the contract language is added. Specifics of the wording were not available. William Rinaldi is president of Mark Construction Services. Rinaldi of Scranton did not attend the meeting.

Leary is excited the project is finally moving forward more than two years after the college publicly announced its plans to open the institute in downtown Nanticoke, along with a Health Sciences Center to be housed in the former Kanjorski Center.

“It is one of the most exciting opportunities we have for expansion of a program that is one of our fastest growing programs. According to all projections the second greatest demand in the region is in the hospitality industry,” Leary said.

The state-of-the art, two-story, roughly 22,000-square-foot building will cost \$7.5 million, but LCCC will only pay \$3,128,000, including a \$100,000 deposit, to build it, according to the contract. The remainder of the money will come from grant money the developer has secured from the state.]

According to the contract: the construction company is scheduled to receive \$1.5 million from the Local Share Gaming grant, \$1 million from the Growing Greener II grant and \$2 million from the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital grant.

Even if the construction firm does not receive the grant money, the college “shall be permitted to remain in occupancy of the property prior to receiving the title of the property.”

Leary expects the building to be ready for classes in the fall of 2010. LCCC should take full control of the building by Aug. 31, 2010. If Mark Construction Services is late in delivering the building, the college can penalize the company by requiring \$2,380 per day be paid to LCCC if the facility or a portion of it is not completed by the end of August. If the facility is still not 100 percent completed by Sept. 21, 2010, the college can require an additional \$423,476 from the construction company.

If the college defaults on its terms and agreements with the developer, LCCC could be forced to pay financial penalties, including the \$7.5 million price of the property with a daily liquidated sum of \$2,380 per day.

9/13/2009

## **City yard sale brings in shoppers despite rain**

### **More than 160 sellers and hundreds of bargain hunters participate in Nanticoke’s annual event.**

Ralph Nardone - Times Leader

Weekend yard sales are a mainstay of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The City of Nanticoke officials coordinated one on Saturday that tied together more than 160 sellers in one large scale yard sale. Organizers estimated several hundred shoppers from local communities and from as far away as Allentown, Berwick and Bloomsburg passed through during the day.

J.D. Verazin, organizer and member of the city’s yard sale committee, said the fourth annual “Trash to Treasure Citywide Yard Sale” spread out to include all of Nanticoke, Honey Pot and parts of Hanover Township.

Verazin said most sellers, who essentially line the streets with items for sale from their front yards or porches, do it “for the heck of it.”

The citywide yard sale is “a fun thing” where people can socialize, talk to old friends and maybe make a few dollars, he added.

Verazin’s display sat under a makeshift rain cover. Despite the wet morning, he estimated about 150 cars drove past his house when about three would on a typical day. Across the town, similar auto and foot traffic paraded through the streets, he said. The visitors from outside the immediate area got to see “what a nice city” Nanticoke is by visiting local merchants and patronizing area restaurants, Verazin said.

Of course, there were some economies of scale for both buyers and sellers, he said. Putting one big yard sale together at one time gave the sellers more traffic and potential sales as well as gave shoppers more bargains to choose from, he said.

Julianna Zarzycki, president of the Historical Society of Nanticoke, said she set up a display to sell off excess inventory of Christmas decorations, books, calendars, glassware, etc. The sale also helped raise the always necessary funds and

draw in potential history buffs who could consider becoming members or who may have “heirlooms” or old photos to contribute.

A “steady flow” of shoppers visited the display, she said. About half of them were from out-of-town, she added. Yvonne Bozinski, director of special events for the City of Nanticoke, spent most of the morning handing out directories to passersby that mapped out where the 160-plus sellers were located. The streets were “backed up” early in the morning as the shoppers rushed in, she said.

She handed out her entire inventory of 210 directories from Patriot Park. The city helped the event by “making it easy” for everyone to participate. They put together the directories and covered the cost of advertising.

Bozinski said many of the sellers who participated were not registered and just set up displays to take part in the day. “People love yard sales,” she said. Some sellers made out “very well,” and some buyers found great bargains, she added.

Verazin said the yard sale committee and the city officials are committed to the annual event. Anyone interested in next year’s event or any other upcoming events in the city can visit [www.nanticokecity.com](http://www.nanticokecity.com).

The citywide yard sale is “a fun thing” where people can socialize, talk to old friends and maybe make a few dollars.

9/13/2009

### **Putting the ‘super’ in superintendent for free**

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

Anthony Perrone loves school. More importantly, he loves children.

Six years after retiring from Greater Nanticoke Area as superintendent, he returns to the halls daily, starting his 47th school year of teaching, inspiring and guiding students and staff.

“Kids are where the action is. The future of the world we will never see. They are the future,” Perrone said when asked what keeps him coming back.

He stopped receiving a salary and benefits from the district when he retired in June 2003, but that hasn’t kept him from continuing to lead the district as superintendent. Perrone, a Pittston native, receives pension and health benefits from the Pennsylvania Public School Employees Retirement System, not the school district.

While Perrone, 67, is the district’s top administrator, he still remains a true friend to the students he serves, school board President Bob Raineri said.

Raineri recalled that during his high school years in the early 1970s, students could always go to Perrone, who was the guidance counselor, to get advice on what courses to take or just to talk about issues affecting their lives.

“Even if you didn’t have a problem you could go down and talk to him. He was always cheerful, easygoing. He would never turn you away. To this day you never see him without a smile,” Raineri said.

Perrone began working for the district as a high school Spanish teacher in 1963 after the self-professed high school bookworm graduated from King’s College. Over the years, Perrone has been involved in every aspect of education – also serving as a school psychologist and director of pupil and personnel services.

GNA and Kennedy elementary schools’ Principal Mariellen Scott looks up to Perrone, believing he is a great example of how to lead a district while keeping the children first.

“He is a caring, fair superintendent,” she said, adding that Perrone still ventures into the classroom to teach.

Last year he presented a lesson to a third-grade class on Spanish language and culture.

In a recent interview, he acknowledged he enjoyed being superintendent, but his real passion is teaching.

“Anyone who really has a love for teaching wants to be in a classroom,” he said.

When Perrone retired, he originally told the board he would work at least one additional year without pay.

“If they had not had the financial crisis, I probably would have retired and moved on,” he said last week.

That one year without pay has now turned into six.

Perrone was named full-time permanent superintendent in June 1996, just four months after starting his second term as acting superintendent after the board bought out the remainder of Superintendent Anthony Trosan’s contract. Perrone first served as acting superintendent for about 18 months starting in 1990 when former Superintendent D. Charles Davis became ill.

When Perrone took the reins of the district in 1996, the system suffered from severe financial problems that nearly led to a state takeover.

Board member Sylvia Mizdail recalled that during that time, when she was school board president, she and Perrone traveled to the state capital many times to work with state officials to get the district back on a firm financial footing.

“He was very good. We made many, many trips to Harrisburg and we got it all straightened out. It was almost like a

full-time job going to Harrisburg all the time,” she laughed.

Mizdail, who served on the board for 26 years, praised Perrone, saying he has been a pleasure to work with as he’s helped the district in numerous ways.

Perrone not only led the district away from financial destruction, he continues to look out for the district’s financial well-being, Raineri said.

“Besides the salary savings, which is a huge savings for us, he scrutinizes the budget very closely with (business manager) Al Melone and he makes the cuts where he has to. No matter where it is or who it is. He does scrutinize every item on the budget.”

Under Perrone’s leadership, the district has undertaken several capital projects, upgrading the windows at Kennedy Elementary and the high school. Air conditioning units were installed at Kennedy and the high school’s air conditioning and lighting systems were upgraded. All the projects have been paid from the district’s existing fund balance.

A new elementary and middle school have been built under Perrone’s administration. The \$9.4 million middle school was constructed in the late 1990s using a \$10 million bond. The \$10.6 million elementary school was constructed in the early part of this century to replace the decades-old original Kennedy School by using an \$8 million loan and money from the district’s fund balance.

This year the district carried over a fund balance of nearly \$4 million. That doesn’t include an additional \$1.7 million in GNA’s reserve account for capital projects.

Greater Nanticoke Area Taxpayers’ Forum President Hank Marks attends school board meetings regularly, letting board members and Perrone know he’s watching their moves. He’s not afraid to tell district administrators when he believes they’ve messed up. At the same time he’s quick to praise them for the district’s successes.

Marks, who has been a district watchdog for nearly 20 years, acknowledges the district under Perrone’s leadership has kept control of its funds.

“Nanticoke is one of the better school districts as far as finances is concerned,” Marks said.

The district is now starting to rebound from several years of low scores on state and federal mandated standardized testing.

“It is hard for any educator to get the educational quality up to where it should be. With the results we are seeing, it is getting better,” Marks said.

This spring Perrone considered again retiring in a few months, but that idea quickly faded.

Through everything he keeps a positive outlook by choosing to always look forward, not backward.

“Your outlook is so different around kids. You can’t live in the past. You have to adapt to what is here,” he said.

9/12/2009

### **Nanticoke ends losing streak at 22 games**

Anthony Oliveri - Times Leader

At 9:03 p.m. Friday night, there was an unfamiliar cheering sound coming from the Nanticoke sidelines.

The team’s 22-game losing streak had ended.

The Trojans broke the longest active streak in District 2, defeating the Columbia-Montour Vo-Tech Rams, 25-8.

The last time the Trojans’ sidelines celebrated after a game was Oct. 27, 2006 with a 24-19 win over Lake Lehman.

“I can’t describe it,” said assistant head coach Mario Cella, who is filling in for his brother, Lou. The head coach, 31, had a heart attack last month and has been asked by doctors to stay away from football until his health improves.

“I had envisioned the win with my brother here. This is his life. This is his team,” said an emotional Mario. “I’m just keeping it on ice for him.”

The Trojans (1-1) ran for a total of 262 yards on 59 carries against the Rams. Nanticoke sophomore running back Brian Maslowski led the way with 32 carries for 152 yards.

The team’s ability to develop the run allowed it to control the clock, which helped notch the win.

“We wanted to follow our bread and butter, which is our O-line,” Cella said. “They couldn’t stop our run so we were going to stick with it until they could stop it.”

Nanticoke quarterback Zak Matuleski gave the Trojans a 7-0 lead on their first drive of the game when he capped a 17-play, 69-yard drive with a 1-yard sneak with 4:05 remaining in the first quarter.

After the first of five fumbles lost by the Rams (1-1) gave the Trojans the ball back after just one play, Nanticoke scored again.

Maslowski reeled off his first of two touchdowns in the contest, an 11-yard TD run on the second play of the second quarter to give his team a 13-0 lead with 11:33 left in the quarter.

The Trojans went up 19-0 in the third on a 4-yard TD run by Edwin Agosto. Maslowski's second TD came with 8:56 remaining in the game and pushed the lead to 25-0.

The Rams ruined Nanticoke's bid for a shutout when they got on the board with 6:56 left in the fourth quarter. After scoring a touchdown on a 13-yard pass from Devante King to Michael Eaton, and a two-point conversion, the Rams recovered an onside kick.

Their momentum was short-lived though, when CMVT lost its fifth fumble of the game and Nanticoke senior Jake Meyers emerged from the pile with the ball raised in the air with 4:08 left in the game.

On the drive, Tom Vitale, a Trojan sophomore, managed to pull off a 30-yard run, which clinched the victory. As the seconds rolled by, the crowd began to cheer with excitement, knowing that their streak had finally come to an end.

9/11/2009

### **Citywide Yard Sale**

Times Leader

The city is hosting its third annual "Trash to Treasures" citywide yard sale from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

People are encouraged to come to Nanticoke to find their own treasures at yard sales happening throughout the city.

People can pick up directory maps at Patriot Park, between South Market and Prospect streets, to find the homes participating in this year's event.

9/11/2009

### **GNA may have vacant seat to fill**

#### **Board member Pattie Bieski not at session, but hinted at resignation due to moving.**

slong@timesleader.com

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board might have a seat to fill soon.

Board member Patti Bieski did not attend Thursday night's monthly meeting, but has in the past couple of months said she might have to resign from the board because she thought she would be moving out of town.

Board members must live within the district limits.

Board President Bob Raineri said he didn't know if Bieski has moved out of town yet. Raineri and Superintendent Tony Perrone said they have not received a resignation letter from Bieski.

Taxpayer advocate and Nanticoke resident Henry Marks told board members that if Bieski does resign, they will need to appoint a candidate to fill Bieski's seat who will not practice nepotism on the board.

He said the district has been affected by nepotism, the practice of hiring relatives, several times in the past.

Board member Tony Prushinski said he is against nepotism, but he noted the district should always hire the best candidate for a particular job, even if that candidate is related to a board member.

"I think we would be harming the district if we didn't select the best candidate," Prushinski said.

Perrone informed Marks that all employment candidates are thoroughly interviewed, and teaching candidates must give a lesson.

Bieski could not be reached Thursday night.

In other business, Perrone noted this year's kindergarten class, with 192 students, was the largest in the district's history.

Also the district has received information from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Ga., and state health authorities regarding swine flu.

"We have been getting more information that this could be something very serious," Perrone told board members. After meeting with the district's nursing staff, Perrone is taking a proactive approach by sending a letter to parents asking them to send hand sanitizer to the schools for students' use during the day to kill germs.

9/9/2009

### **Sweeties remember Jolly Joe**

#### **Red Hat Society honors late polka band leader in Nanticoke for his concerts to cheer up nursing home patients.**

slong@timesleader.com

Jolly Joe and the Bavarians used to bring smiles to residents at the Guardian Health Care in Nanticoke's Sheatown neighborhood when the group played monthly polka shows.

The ethnic music could be heard once again in Guardian Health Care on Tuesday afternoon as the Red Hat Sweeties, a

division of the Red Hat Society, honored the late Jolly Joe for his years of dedication and service to the center and its elderly residents by hosting a tribute concert during the society's monthly meeting.

Al "Jolly Joe" Truskowski, bandleader of the famous polka band, died in April.

Another legendary polka entertainer and Jolly Joe's friend, Jan Lewan, performed at the meeting, singing "Czarna Madonna," which was Jolly Joe's favorite song, according to his wife.

Jolly Joe's widow, Bernadette, and his brother, Peter Truskowski, attended the meeting and participated in the hour-long festivities that included singing and dancing "The Chicken Dance" and Polka tunes.

"It was very dear to my heart. It was very touching, especially to have my brother-in-law Peter there," Bernadette said, explaining how Peter would fill in for Jolly Joe when he became ill.

She was also extremely happy that Lewan performed because he and her husband were friends. Al Truskowski visited Lewan in prison after he pleaded guilty to a racketeering charge in 2004. At Al Truskowski's request, Lewan sang at his funeral, just shortly after being released from prison.

Bernadette Truskowski said her husband's band was the most requested band to play at the center.

"He especially loved the nursing home residents. He not only played Guardian, he played all over the county, outside the Valley. The nursing home residents were very dear to his heart. ... When people come and perform and there is music, they really liven up. He saw how smiles would come on their face when there was music," she said.

9/7/2009

**Wheel good way to help sick kids**

**Hundreds of motorcyclists ride in memory of "A.J." Novitski of Mountain Top.**

Janine Ungvarsky - Times Leader

Well over 400 bikers took off from Holy Child Grove Sunday morning to ride more than 40 miles in the ninth annual Valley with a Heart Ride.

"Thanks to the (Luzerne County) Sheriff's Department, who did a wonderful job, we had a nice safe ride down to Mocanaqua," said event President Rick Temerantz.

The bikers cycled through Shickshinny, Harveysville and Hunlock Creek before returning to the grove for a family picnic. Dozens of volunteers served food and manned booths selling T-shirts, instant bingo and silent auction chances to hundreds of people who paid \$5 each for entry to the picnic. The event benefits seriously ill children, especially Robert Drummonds, 2, of Hughestown and Justin Burns, 6, of Avoca. This year's ride was dedicated to the memory of Anthony John "A.J." Novitski, 18, of Mountain Top, who passed away in June.

Temerantz said the event began as a one-time event to help the daughter of a friend. "We raised thousands of dollars, but besides the money, that day meant so much to that little girl. It helped her spirit so much that she wrote about it in her diary and came out to help the next year," he said. "She's since passed but knowing what it meant still chokes me up. These people need help with all kinds of things —gas cards, help paying bills, helping paying the mortgage. Someone has to care and that's what Valley with a Heart is about."

For Tony Novitski, father of A.J. Novitski, it was a bittersweet day. "It's sad but it's also happy because I know what Valley with a Heart does for kids and the needs they've blessed," Novitski said.

When Temerantz's committee learned that A.J.'s condition had worsened, they arranged a special surprise. "On very short notice, they got more than 100 riders for a ride for A.J.," Novitski said. "When we pulled into the parking lot and he saw them, he was grinning ear to ear. To see that smile, that's what they did for him and no money could ever replace that. The spiritual energy they create with what they do, there aren't words for it. It's a God thing."

Volunteers, vendors and participants all claim they are the ones who benefit from the event. "There's nothing like helping a child in need," said Kingston resident Francine Harrison, who rode as a passenger in the motorcycle ride. "It's like the ultimate thing a person can do."

Harrison said she has a grandchild with cerebral palsy. "I know what it's like. If more people did stuff like this the world would be a better place."

Newport Township vendor Phyllis Stamile was selling chocolate motorcycles and The Candy Shack's special peanut butter silk candies, with a portion of the proceeds going to Valley with a Heart. She also donated several silent auction baskets. "It breaks my heart when I see a sick child and this is a marvelous thing that they do," she said.

While this was Stamile's first year with the event, her granddaughter, Jaclyn Olshefski, has volunteered for four years. "I get back when I do this," she said. "I love it all, but I especially love helping the kids. When (Justin) was on stage this morning he was so excited, it was just great."

Justin's mother, Maria Burns, said the event means more than just financial help. "This is just so wonderful," she said as

she looked around the packed picnic grounds.

She said her son has Down syndrome and was recently diagnosed with leukemia and didn't realize the day was a fundraiser to help him. "He was in awe of the motorcycles and loves dancing to the music," she said, noting that Justin starts a new and difficult round of chemotherapy on Tuesday. "This is a great thing for him to have today," she said.

9/3/2009

### **Nanticoke may put limits on number of pets allowed**

#### **City says current animal ordinance needs updating; revised law not ready yet.**

Ian Campbell - Times Leader

Council Wednesday discussed a potential animal ordinance that could see limits on the numbers of animals allowed on a property.

The ordinance is at least a month from completion, according to solicitor William Finnegan, but when it comes up for a vote it should include the suggestions of city police and code enforcement officers.

Recent changes included setting an hour as the earliest time a barking dog could be classed as a violation, Finnegan noted.

The city's current ordinance needs to be strengthened, council was told.

Council also gave a second reading to an underage drinking ordinance designed to dissuade property owners from allowing underage drinking parties to be held on their properties. It also imposes penalties for noise and behavior issues.

In other business, council was asked to look into moving the city sign to a location actually within the city.

The current Nanticoke City sign on Sans Souci Parkway is located in Hanover Township, and moving it would also give the city the opportunity to replace it with one in better condition, according to Councilman James Litchkofski.

A key issue could be finding a location inside the city line that would be available for the city to use, either on city property or on privately owned property, that did not obstruct vehicle lines of sight, council noted.

Litchkofski also said plans have been made with the state Department of Transportation to repave roads leaving and entering the Honey Pot section. The work will start Oct. 1.

Council was also asked to look into an issue of private use of city land on Lower Broadway. Council was told that a preliminary study by city staff had revealed at least four owners are questionable, but that a full report would probably be ready by the next meeting.

8/27/2009

### **85 NEPA soldiers returning from Iraq with brigade soon**

#### **Pa. National Guard members to land at Fort Dix, N.J. Local celebration set for Dec. 11.**

slong@timesleader.com

About 85 Pennsylvania National Guard soldiers from the Wyoming Valley are set to return from Iraq in the next couple of weeks.

The 75 members of the 109th Field Artillery and 10 members of the 228th G Support Battalion are a part of the 56th Stryker Brigade of 4,000 soldiers who are returning from Iraq, according to National Guard spokesman Sgt 1st Class John Paul Karpovich.

Field Artillery Battalion Commander Kevin Miller praised the soldiers for their service.

Members of the field artillery worked on missions firing artillery shells, and two medics were assigned to units in the field. In addition, 228th members provided logistical support in the maintenance, supply and culinary departments.

"They performed brilliantly. They accomplished every mission and task to the highest standard and continued to enhance the great reputation of the 109th," Miller said.

The exact date the soldiers will land at Fort Dix, N.J., is unknown, but Karpovich is confident it will be within the first week of September. The soldiers will remain at the New Jersey Army base for a few days for debriefings before they can return home.

Most of the soldiers will be picked up by their families after their yearlong tour is complete. There are about 20 scheduled to travel back together as a group to the Nanticoke Armory after wrapping up at Fort Dix, Karpovich said. After deployment last September, they traveled to Fort Indiantown Gap and then Camp Shelby in Mississippi for training before deploying to Iraq in January.

Because the soldiers are returning to the Wyoming Valley individually, National Guard officials will be scheduling a welcome home ceremony Dec. 11 to honor the men and their families of the 109th and 228th for their service.

8/24/2009

**Nanticoke/Newport eight at Junior World Series** - Please read down the page for more information

Citizens Voice

The Nanticoke/Newport softball team finished eighth following a 3-2 loss to Santa Clara, Utah, on Saturday in the Junior League World Series in Kirkland, Washington.

Gabby Grabowski went 1 for 1 and Maggie Gola doubled for Nanticoke/Newport.

Nanticoke/Newport went 3-3 overall in the tournament.

Puerto Rico won the championship with a 2-1 win over Elyria, Ohio.

8/23/2009

**Free chess lessons prove popular**

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For his first time playing chess, Tyler Zaremba felt he didn't do too badly Thursday during the two games he played at the West Side Playground in Nanticoke.

"The first time I almost won," he said.

The 9-year-old Greater Nanticoke Area student was one of the participants for the day at the Nanticoke Recreation Board-sponsored free chess lessons for all Nanticoke residents.

Zaremba, of Nanticoke, said his grandfather signed him up for the lessons after hearing he wanted to learn how to play. He said he enjoys the game and wants to sign up for the chess club at school when he enters fourth grade in the fall.

"It's fun. Since I'm a really good thinker, chess would be a good game for me, since chess takes a lot of thinking," he said.

Frank Procopio of Wilkes-Barre, a certified chess coach by the U.S. Chess Federation, conducted the lessons Thursday. He's taught scholastic chess for the past 21 years and had a hand in starting several clubs at schools throughout the area. Students in those groups usually start out learning strategy, such as opening moves, and playing informal games before playing in a chess tournament in the second half of the school year, he said.

"Even though it's not a physical contact sport, there's an element of teaching them sportsmanship, how to win gracefully, how to lose gracefully, and how to be a team player," Procopio said.

Sarah Cragle, 10, of Nanticoke has been playing chess for three years, and won the game she played Thursday. She belonged to the chess club overseen by Procopio at St. Peter and Paul's Elementary School, which closed in June, and she will join the new one he starts at Wyoming Area Catholic in the fall.

"I really like the strategy. I like the feeling when you win, you learn when you lose," she said of her attraction to the game.

Although playing chess is mostly a pastime at the moment, Cragle said she hasn't ruled out competing officially. But for now, she'll just keep playing for fun.

The chess lessons are held at the West Side Playground in Nanticoke. For information on future lessons, call Betsey or Patti at Nanticoke City Hall at 735-2800.

8/23/2009

**Skateboarders liven up Nanticoke Fairgrounds**

**2nd annual Sk8tacular event to raise awareness for permanent skate park draws more than 100.**

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Ron Wolfe of Glen Lyon sometimes gets in trouble when he wants to go skateboarding because there is not a legal public place in the Wyoming Valley for him to practice.

Wolfe, 16, and at least 100 other skateboarders and BMX riders from throughout Luzerne County hit slider rails and quarter pipes with their boards and bikes at old Nanticoke Fairgrounds Saturday without getting in trouble with police because they were participating in the 2nd annual Sk8tacular event. It was hosted by James Gidosh, 31, and Kevin Pizzano, 28, of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Skate Park Alliance.

As Wolfe and others swirled around the parking lot listening to live bands, they helped raise awareness of the need for a permanent skateboard park in Luzerne County and money to help build it. State Rep. John Yudichak's office is working to secure state funding to help build a multi-purpose park at the fairgrounds.

Wolfe supports the idea of establishing a skate and bike park in Nanticoke because "it keeps you out of trouble and it

brings communities together,” he said.

Saturday’s event won’t raise a great deal of money, but Gidosh said it helps raise awareness for the need for such a facility.

Pizzano said there aren’t enough activities for youths in Luzerne County, and building skateboard parks would give them a place to stay out of trouble, socialize with friends and practice their sport.

“We are doing this for the kids. You have to start doing things for the younger people and not tell they can’t do things. This is exercise and this is what they love. You are supposed to support this kind of stuff,” Pizzano said.

He and Gidosh are just two members of the Lower Broadway Park Project that is teaming with state and city officials to develop 134.5 acres into a park to include a skate board park, BMX bike park, walking trails, benches and picnic areas. The park will be constructed in phases with plans for it to eventually include a natural area, canoe launch, soccer fields, football practice field and environmental education area.

“This will be the only one of its kind in a 100-mile radius,” Pizzano said. Often skateboarders must travel to Philadelphia or Binghamton, N.Y., for the closest quality skateboard park, Pizzano said, noting a 15,000-square-foot facility was being built in York.

8/23/2009

### **Riders all revved up for Nanticoke races**

#### **A New Zealand teen takes first in the featured \$1,000 race on 10-event program.**

Keith Jablonski For The Times Leader

The first Nanticoke Criterium Bicycle Race finally found a home and took place as scheduled Saturday.

Originally to be held at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School, complaints about blocked traffic and relocation of cars forced the event to be moved. Luzerne County Community College stepped in and opened their gates on short notice.

“We’re very gracious to LCCC President Tom Leary to let us hold the event here,” said Phil Cable, the promoter of the annual race. “We had two days to set this up. It turned out pretty well.”

More than 60 riders registered for the 10 races, with some coming from Virginia, New York and a team of five from New Zealand.

The feature race was a 35-mile trek for category one, two and three riders with a total purse of \$1,000. It was won by Jason Christie, 18, from New Zealand.

Other races were for beginners up to experienced amateurs, ranging in age from 10 to adult and distances from one to 25 miles.

“It’s a different style of racing over here,” said Christie, referring to the stiffer competition in the United States. “It’s good experience for all of us.”

The New Zealand team is racing in America hoping to prepare itself for the 2012 Olympics in London.

The idea for the racing event came from Gene Ditzler, the acting executive director for the Nanticoke Housing Authority.

“I wanted to give the kids something to do to help push them in the right direction,” Ditzler said in her front-row seat by the finish line. “I think everything went great and am looking forward to an even better one next year.”

Ditzler said she began thinking about this cycling event two years ago and called Mark Sickler of Sicklers Bike Shop to get the process going.

“Mark told me he had the perfect guy for me,” Ditzler said. “He’s the one who got me in touch with Phil.

“Phil’s been great. None of this would have been possible without him.”

The Wilkes-Barre Pro-Am Twilight Criterium is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 4, starting at 5:30 p.m. The start and finish for the five races are at Public Square.

First-place finishers:

Youth 14 and under, 1mile: Youth Development team (name unavailable)

Youth 15-18, 2 miles: Michael Havard, Pa.

Junior 10-14, 10 miles: Christopher Baranoski, Chester County Cycling Foundation, Pa.

Women Cat. 4, 15 miles: Nadia Latzgo, Lehigh Wheelmen Association, Pa.

Junior 15-18, 14 miles: John Novak; Sickler’s Racing/Upstate Villa, Pa.

Cat 4-5 Men, 17 miles: Edward Ellard; Hot Tamales, Pa.

Women Open, 17 miles: Dale Tye; Attarium Women’s Cycling

Master 45-older, 17 miles: Phillip Laskaris, unattached, Pa.

Cat. 3-4 Men, 25 miles: Dayle Chentley; New Zealand National



8/23/2009

### **Get well Lou**

Times Leader

My best wishes for a speedy recovery go out to Nanticoke Head Football Coach Lou Cella. Cella is recovering from a heart attack suffered about a month ago.

A former Blue Devils lineman, Cella was ready to begin his second year at the helm of the Trojans.

Doctors are not yet ready to clear the OFHS Class of 1997 grad to even attend practice as Cella is known as a tireless worker when it comes to coaching and is sure to be chomping at the bit to get back to teaching the sport he loves.

With Coach Lou at home recovering, the Trojans needed to look no further for an interim head coach, and literally stayed in the family when they tabbed Lou's brother Mario to lead the squad.

This is Mario's first head coaching gig after spending time as an assistant last year on his brother's staff, and at Pittston Area for a few seasons before that.

8/22/2009

### **Locals post another victory**

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Having lost their first two games and being essentially eliminated from championship contention, the players on the Nanticoke/Newport softball team could have easily turned their attention to the rest of the summer and the start of the new school year.

Instead, they continued to focus on softball.

Pitchers Brooke Chapin and Hannah Rubasky combined on a four-hit shutout to lead Nanticoke/Newport to a 5-0 win against the host team from Sammamish, Wash. at the Junior League Softball World Series in Kirkland, Wash. on Friday.

With the win, Nanticoke/Newport – representing U.S. East – will play U.S. West at 12:30 p.m. today in the fifth/sixth-place game. The win was the three in a row for Nanticoke/Newport following the two losses.

“We have a chance to go 4-2. You can't ask for much better than that,” said manager Bill Rubasky. “The girls are looking forward to the game. After the losses, they could have laid down and got beat up. Instead, they won three in a row. They're practicing hard and having fun.”

Today's game will be a rematch of a third-round pool play game, which was won by Nanticoke/Newport, 8-1. U.S. West – a team representing Santa Clara, Utah – defeated U.S. Southwest (La Grange, Texas) on Friday. The West entered that game with a 1-3 record, while the Southwest was 3-1.

The 10-team international tournament was divided into two five-team pools, with the top two teams from each pool advancing to the championship semifinals. The rest of the teams were seeded according to the records in their respective pools. At press time, Pool B – which included Nanticoke/Newport – had a 3-0 record against the teams in Pool A.

“I think it shows how strong our pool was,” said Bill Rubasky, whose team lost to U.S. Central and Asia-Pacific. At press time, it appeared as though those two teams would advance to today's championship game. “Our kids feel we can play with any team here.”

Nanticoke/Newport had just four hits but took advantage of them – as well as several walks and errors by the host team, which earned an automatic berth in the tournament for being the host.

Nanticoke/Newport took a 1-0 lead in the second inning and increased the advantage to 3-0 with a pair of runs in the fourth. The team sealed the win with two runs in the bottom of the fifth.

Sarah Higgins and Gabby Kowalski each had hits to give Nanticoke/Newport its early lead. Later in the game, Maggie Gola and Ashley Horoshock each had a hit.

Chapin pitched the first four innings and picked up the win. She struck out three and allowed two hits. Hannah Rubasky finished things off with three shutout innings, allowing two hits while striking out two.

“We played a good game,” said Bill Rubasky. “We got some good pitching and we played really good defense again. We only had four hits, but we bunted people over and were able to drive them in. The girls keep playing hard. They know (today) is their last game of the season. It would be great finish with four straight wins.”

8/21/2009

### **Local team victorious, gets shot at fifth**

KIRKLAND, Wash. – The longer the Junior League Softball World Series goes, the better Nanticoke/Newport is hitting.

The local team – which is representing U.S. East – banged out more than 10 hits en route to an 8-4 win against Europe/Middle East/Africa in the fourth, and final, round of pool play at the international tournament.

The win raised Nanticoke/Newport's record to 2-2 in pool play. Although that record isn't good enough to qualify the team for the championship semifinals – which feature the top two teams in each of the two pools – Nanticoke/Newport has an opportunity to finish fifth in the 10-team tournament.

U.S. East will play the host team from Sammamish, Wash., at 4:45 p.m. (EDT) today with a berth in Saturday's fifth/sixth-place game at stake. The loser will play in the seventh/eighth-place game Saturday. The team from Washington received a spot in the tournament for being the host. The team will take a 1-3 record into the game against Nanticoke/Newport.

EMEA, which finished pool play without a win in four games, took a 1-0 lead against Nanticoke/Newport in the first inning. East responded with a double by Gabby Grabowski, a sacrifice bunt by Hannah Rubasky and a run-scoring fielder's choice by Brooke Chapin to tie the game 1-1 in the second inning.

Then the offensive floodgates opened for Nanticoke/Newport.

The team scored four runs in the third inning – Sammy Gow, Sarah Higgins and Maggie Gola each had key hits – to take a 5-1 lead and scored three runs in the top of the fourth to make it 8-1. Katie Kowalski had the big hit of the inning, a two-out solo home run.

Rubasky picked up the win, allowing no hits in four innings while striking out five. The only run she allowed was unearned. Chapin pitched the final three innings, giving up just three hits while striking out two. EMEA scored one run in the fifth and two in the sixth to account for the final score.

The championship semifinals will feature U.S. Central (Iowa) vs. U.S. Southeast (Texas) and Asia-Pacific (Philippines) vs. Latin America (Puerto Rico). Nanticoke/Newport's losses came against Asia-Pacific (5-4) and Central (4-0). In both games, one bad inning led to the opponent scoring all of its runs.

“Our kids are upbeat. We know we're just as good as any team here,” said Nanticoke/Newport manager Bill Rubasky. “We had two real tough losses. We're hoping to finish with two more wins.”

8/21/2009

### **Skaters ready to roll at new park**

boboyle@timesleader.com

NANTICOKE – Area skateboarders are tuning up their wheels in anticipation of a concrete skate park to be built in Nanticoke.

Banned from public parks just about everywhere, the skateboarders are working hard to help raise money to build a venue for the thousands of local enthusiasts.

James Gidosh and Kevin Pizzano of NEPA Skate Park Alliance are more than hopeful that Nanticoke, with the help of state Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, will finally give them their skate park.

“It really seems to be coming together – finally,” Gidosh said Thursday. “The city and Rep. Yudichak are trying to get grant money to make it happen.”

And the skaters aren't just sitting by and waiting. Gidosh said the alliance has raised around \$5,000 to help with the financing and he and Pizzano expect to raise another \$2,000 or \$3,000 this weekend.

NEPA Skate Park Alliance is sponsoring “Sk8tacular” – a daylong event featuring more than 15 local bands. The event will start at noon Saturday at the proposed site of the new skate park, Lower Broadway Street in Nanticoke across from the Weis Markets store.

Donation is \$10 and proceeds benefit the future skate park, Gidosh said.

A temporary skate park will be set up at the site Saturday to offer boarders the chance to display their talents.

“Our market research shows there are thousands of skateboarders in the area,” Gidosh said. “We have been banned from everywhere, but nobody has ever offered us a solution. Nanticoke and Representative Yudichak are working very hard to give us that solution.”

Joe Boylan of Yudichak's district staff said the park plans call for much more than a skate park. Boylan said the proposed park is scheduled to be developed on 134.58 acres of land on either side of the northern end of Lower Broadway Street between the Susquehanna River and the downtown Nanticoke business district.

Boylan said the Lower Broadway Park Project will be divided into three phases. Phase 1 will feature the skate board park, a BMX bike park, walking trails, a gateway garden and benches; Phase 2 will add a natural area, canoe launch and trail connectivity; Phase 3 will bring soccer fields, a practice football field, an environmental education area and a multi-use open lawn area.

“We have encountered many challenges in the course of this project, but we are charging ahead with the park,” Yudichak said. “It is another important piece to our efforts to transform the economic, residential and recreational landscape of the south valley.”

Boylan said he is awaiting approval of two grants: one for \$162,000 from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the other for \$100,000 from the state Department of Community and Economic Development.

8/20/2009

## **Junior Softball World Series**

### **Mixed emotions for Nanticoke team**

dkonopki@timesleader.com

The Nanticoke/Newport Junior League softball team has played almost two dozen games and more than 140 innings since beginning its postseason run at the District 16 tournament last month.

After all of that competition, it appears as though one bad inning will keep the team from possibly playing for a World Series championship.

Nanticoke/Newport rolled to an 8-1 win against a team from Santa Clara, Utah, in the third game of pool play at the Junior League Softball World Series in Kirkland, Wash., on Wednesday afternoon. The win raised Nanticoke/Newport's record to 1-2 in Pool B play, which concludes today.

But just a few hours following their first win of the tournament, the local team was eliminated from championship contention when Asia-Pacific defeated EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa) to remain unbeaten in pool play.

Asia-Pacific will join fellow unbeaten U.S. Central (Elyria, Ohio) in the championship semifinals against the top two teams from Pool A.

Although the opportunity to play for a championship is no longer a reality, manager Bill Rubasky says his team will continue to play hard.

“We want to win the next three games. Our goal right now is to finish 4-2,” he said. “It's a very positive group. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and they're taking it all in. They're really enjoying it.”

In the first round of pool play earlier this week, Nanticoke/Newport held a 4-0 lead with one out in the bottom of the sixth inning against Asia-Pacific. The team from the Philippines rallied for five runs in a 5-4 win.

If Nanticoke/Newport had held on for the win, it would have needed only a win at 5:45 p.m. (EDT) today against winless EMEA – a team from Milan, Italy – to join U.S. Central in the championship semifinals.

Nanticoke/Newport also gave up four runs in one inning in a 4-0 loss to U.S. Central on Tuesday.

Despite the 0-2 record, Nanticoke/Newport continued to play hard and posted an impressive win against U.S. West (Santa Clara, Utah) on Wednesday.

Heather Perkowski belted a bases-loaded single to highlight a five-run fifth inning for Nanticoke/Newport, which banged out 14 hits in the game. All nine starters had at least one hit.

Maggie Gola led the team with three singles, while Sammy Gow added a pair of doubles. Katie Kowalski and Perkowski also finished with two hits each. Nanticoke/Newport trailed 1-0 before tying the game at 1-1 in the top of the third inning and grabbing a 2-1 lead in the fourth.

Brooke Chapin picked up the pitching win for Nanticoke/Newport, allowing one run on four hits in four innings.

Hannah Rubasky pitched three scoreless innings, striking out two and allowing just two hits.

“I'm proud of the girls,” said Bill Rubasky, whose team has posted a combined 20-3 record in district, sectional, state, regional and World Series play. “They were a little down after those two tough losses. But we hit the ball well today and we played very good defense.”

The 10-team tournament features six teams from the United States and four international teams. The tournament is divided into two five-team pools, with each team playing the other four teams in their respective pools.

The top two teams in each pool advance to a championship semifinals, while the other teams are seeded for play to determine fifth through 10th place.

Despite being 2,288 miles from Nanticoke, the players can feel the support from their hometown, Rubasky said.

“We're very fortunate to have fans back home who are following this team and supporting us,” he said. “I can't thank them enough and the team thanks them. It's been a great experience.”

8/20/2009

## **Nanticoke clamping down on partying**

**City council OKs first reading of ordinance designed to cut down on noisy parties.**

slong@timesleader.com

After a brief discussion Wednesday, city council approved the first reading of the proposed Social Host Accountability Ordinance, although two elected officials were absent.

Mayor John Bushko and Councilman Jon Metta did not attend the meeting. Councilman Joe Dougherty presided with Councilmen Jim Litchkofski and Brent Makarczyk present.

The proposal is designed to “ensure peace and tranquility in the community,” city solicitor William Finnegan explained. It allows property owners to be fined for excessive loud parties where alcohol is served to underage people. Owners could be charged for expenses if city workers or city-paid emergency response personnel must respond to the scene more than once.

Litchkofski asked Finnegan how the ordinance would affect property owners if they were landlords.

Finnegan said in that case it would be the tenants’ responsibility and they would be held liable for the fines. Landlords could still be held responsible, though, if the landlord knows the tenants are holding parties that become excessively loud and unruly with alcohol being served to minors.

Resident Dennis Butler said he supported such an ordinance, but he said he felt the city needed to strengthen its wording to specifically state the circumstance under which landlords would be held liable.

The ordinance must be approved one more time before it becomes law.

In other business, Dougherty advised council that the street department’s pickup truck was beyond repair and a new one was needed before winter.

The city received a quote of \$36,587 for a 2010 Ford F350 equipped with a snow plow and salt spreader, Dougherty said. The city did not put out a bid for the truck itself, but can purchase the vehicle using a state cooperative bidding process, known as Costars, City Administrator Holly Quinn said.

The normal price for the truck without the winter weather attachments was \$41,215, she said.

In other business, City Treasurer Al Wytoshek asked if the city was going to repay a \$300,000 tax anticipation note earlier than the Dec. 31 deadline. He thought the city might save up to \$50,000 on the 3.15 percent interest rate if it did.

Quinn said she checked with the lender, PNC Bank, and discovered the city would only save between \$1,000 and \$2,000 on the interest if it was paid off now. The total interest expected to be paid on the loan is roughly \$10,000, she said.

She said Metta told her it would be best if the money was kept in accounts in case unforeseen problems arise.

8/18/2009

## **Déjà vu in loss for Nanticoke/Newport**

Times Leader

KIRKLAND, Wash. – One bad inning. One tough loss.

For the second consecutive night, Nanticoke/Newport played well with the exception of one inning Monday night at the Junior League Softball World Series, this time giving up four unearned runs in the fourth inning in a 4-0 loss to U.S. Central (Elyria, Ohio).

The loss gives Nanticoke/Newport an 0-2 record after two games in pool play. The team gets the day off today before playing Wednesday and Thursday. Central, which won by the 10-run rule in the first round, improved to 2-0.

The 10 teams in the tourney are divided into two five-team pools, with each team playing the other four teams in their pools. Following pool play, which concludes Thursday, the top two teams from each pool will play in a single-elimination tournament.

“We’re not out of it,” said Nanticoke/Newport manager Bill Rubasky. “But we’re going to need some help. We need three teams to finish 2-2 and the (top) team to finish 4-0. It’s possible. I think we’ve played the toughest two teams.”

Central broke a scoreless tie with four unearned runs in the fourth inning off Nanticoke/Newport pitcher Hannah Rubasky. The pitcher allowed just two hits in four innings while striking out seven and walking none. Brooke Chapin replaced Rubasky on the mound and allowed no runs on one hit in two innings.

In a 5-4 loss to Asia-Pacific in the first round of pool play on Sunday afternoon, Nanticoke/Newport gave up all five runs in the bottom of the sixth inning. Monday night, it was déjà vu.

“We had one bad inning again,” said Bill Rubasky. “Only this time, the runs were scored on errors. We played good in the field except for that one inning.”

Nanticoke/Newport banged out four hits – including a double and single by Hannah Rubasky – but wasn’t able to score against the Central pitcher. A play by the Central left fielder just a few pitches into the game set the tone for the rest of the contest, said Bill Rubasky.

Sammy Gow smacked a line drive down the left-field line that was caught by the diving left-fielder. The leadoff batter had one of her team’s four hits later in the game.

“It was an amazing catch,” said Rubasky. “She sold out. If she doesn’t catch that ball, it’s a triple. They made some amazing plays in the field. We hit the ball hard, but they made all of the plays. They played well defensively.”

Ten teams – six from the United States and four international squads – are competing that the Junior League Softball World Series. Almost all of the players will be high school sophomores or freshmen in the fall.

The 10 teams are divided into two five-team pools, with each team playing the other four teams in their pools.

Following pool play, which concludes Thursday, the top two teams from each pool will play in a single-elimination tournament.

Nanticoke/Newport is representing the U.S. East in Pool B. Other teams in Pool B are U.S. Central (Ohio), U.S. West (Santa Clara, Utah), EMEA (Milan, Italy) and Asia-Pacific (Mataki City).

Bill Rubasky said his team will enjoy the off-day before playing a team representing Snow Canyon Little League in Santa Clara, Utah at 5 p.m. EDT Wednesday.

“We’re going to have a practice and then do some things with the girls, see some of the sights,” he said. “We need to win (Wednesday). I think the girls will be ready.”

8/17/2009

### **Bad inning proves costly**

### **Nanticoke/Newport falls after team from Philippines scores five runs in sixth inning.**

Times Leader

KIRKLAND, Wash. – Just as it had done through the district, sectional, state and regional tournaments, Nanticoke/Newport was cruising along at the Junior League Softball World Series on Sunday afternoon.

Only this time, the outcome was different.

Makati City (Philippines) scored five runs in the bottom of the sixth inning to post a 5-4 come-from-behind win against Nanticoke/Newport in the opening round of pool play. Nanticoke/Newport will play a team from Elyria, Ohio at 8 p.m. (EDT) today as pool play continues.

Ten teams – six from the United States and four international squads – are competing that the Junior League Softball World Series. Almost all of the players will be high school sophomores or freshmen in the fall.

The 10 teams are divided into two five-team pools, with each team playing the other four teams in their pools.

Following pool play, which concludes Thursday, the top two teams from each pool will play in a single-elimination tournament.

Nanticoke/Newport is representing the U.S. East in Pool B. Other teams in Pool B are U.S. Central (Ohio), U.S. West (Santa Clara, Utah), EMEA (Milan, Italy) and Asia-Pacific (Mataki City).

Nanticoke/Newport starting pitcher Brooke Chapin threw the first four innings without allowing any Asia-Pacific batters to reach base. Chapin struck out five before being replaced by Hannah Rubasky, who kept the perfect game going with a 1-2-3 inning in the bottom of the fifth.

Trailing 4-0, Asia-Pacific scored two runs with one out in the bottom of the sixth and added three more with two outs to take a 5-4 lead.

“We’ve done it in the past,” said Nanticoke/Newport manager Bill Rubasky, referring to the use of two pitchers. “It’s been working for us. It just didn’t work out today.”

Katie Kowalski drove in a run in the top of the first with the first of her two hits as Nanticoke/Newport grabbed an early 1-0 lead. Sammy Gow led off the game with a double and scored on Kowalski’s single.

In the top of the third inning, Sara Higgins singled and advanced to third when Kowalski reached on an error. Hannah Rubasky followed with a fielder’s choice groundout, scoring Higgins to make it 2-0.

Nanticoke/Newport doubled its lead in the top of the sixth inning. Kowalski started things off with a double and scored when Rubasky reached on an error. Gabby Grabowski followed with an RBI single to score Rubasky and give Nanticoke/Newport a 5-4 lead.

“We didn’t play our best game, but we battled,” said Bill Rubasky. “We told the girls we had one bad inning.”

Otherwise, I thought we were the better team. We struck out a little more than we usually do, but we didn't make an error. (Today) is another game. The big thing is getting to the final four."

The Nanticoke/Newport manager expects his team to bounce back from the loss.

"They girls were a little down after the game," he said. "But I think we'll be ready (today). After today's game, the girls know they can compete with the teams that are here."

8/18/2009

### **Races scheduled to rev up more interest in cycling**

### **Nanticoke and W-B events set for kids, newcomers to sport as well as professionals.**

boboyle@timesleader.com

Bicycle racing is getting more and more popular and Phil Cable wants to help young people learn the right way. Cable said there will be opportunities for kids and new-to-racing cyclists as well as experienced racers at the First Nanticoke Criterium Bike Race on Saturday at John S. Fine High School, Kosciusko Street.

Registration begins at 8 a.m. and racing starts at 9. All the participants get a T-shirt and medal, Cable said.

Cable is working hard to promote cycling in the area. He also has organized a pro-am race for the evening of Sept. 4 in downtown Wilkes-Barre.

"We are kicking off the evening with kids' races and a celebrity race for charity," Cable said.

"The goal is to help kids get involved in cycling," Cable said. "I coach and promote races. The Nanticoke event will consist of youth development races sanctioned by the USA Cycling Federation, an affiliate of the U.S. Olympic program."

Cable said he feels it's important to hold this event because of the increased interest locally in bicycling.

"It's important for the community," Cable said. "Cycling is a passion for me and it's really taking off in the area; you see more and more people out there with gear on."

Cable said bicycling is "an addictive sport" that requires endurance. He said as cyclists get more fit, they want to do it more.

"People have helped me in my life and so has cycling," Cable said. "I want to give back to the community and help grow the sport."

On Sept. 4, Cable will hold the Wilkes-Barre Pro-Am Twilight Criterium. Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania has signed on as a sponsor and Jack Williams Tire is sponsoring the youth races.

The youth events will feature three age groups: 6 and under; 7 to 10; and 11 to 14. The pre-registration deadline is Aug. 25. More information can be obtained by calling Cable at 570-814-5326, or e-mailing him at coachcable@yahoo.com.

The main event will be a 50-mile race through downtown Wilkes-Barre. The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. Cash prizes will be awarded with the top payout \$800. Start and finish will be on Public Square.

8/17/2009

### **Coal miners remembered**

### **Honoring the industry and its workers the theme of Nanticoke's annual festival.**

Ralph Nardone - Times Leader

Patriot Park came alive with musical entertainment, arts and crafts, and a homemade pierogie eating contest this past weekend during the fifth annual Coal Miners Heritage Festival.

The theme of the three day get-together, sponsored by the South Valley Chamber of Commerce, centered around honoring the coal industry and the people who worked in it.

Jerry Hudak, president of the chamber, said that the approximately 4,000 people who visited the festival helped raise an estimated \$5,000 for local businesses. He said the "highlight" was a religious service on Sunday afternoon commemorating the miners and their families. Several hundred people attended, he said.

Barbara Kosek, owner of Lighten Up, a "fitness and comfort center for women" on North Market Street in Nanticoke, said the chamber helped her get the business started. She operated a booth at the festival to attract new customers and show her wares.

She said the festival allows local residents to appreciate the good traits of Nanticoke and surrounding communities. "I believe in Nanticoke. I think it's beautiful," she said.

Besides the food and festivities, coal history devotees staged presentations. Karen Dougherty from the Huber Breaker Preservation Society solicited support for its "Buy-a-Brick" program. Interested donators can purchase bricks made

from recycled mine material to help pay for the \$10,000 construction of the Huber Breaker Northern Anthracite Coal Field Miners Memorial.

She also invited the public to participate in several events scheduled for next month that honor the miners killed in the Avondale disaster in 1869 and the Exeter Shaft disaster of 1898. She and other members of the preservation society do not want miners to become forgotten, she said.

Gene Gomolka, author of "Coal Cracker's Son," sold copies of his book based on the life of a local Polish coal-mining family. The story line centers on Nanticoke and the "intrinsic dangers" of working in local mines, he said.

Carl Orechovsky showed historical reports from his new Web site, [www.oldforgecoalmine.com](http://www.oldforgecoalmine.com). The site shows photos and official documents including state mine inspector reports, bulletins from the U.S. Bureau of Mines, and papers pertaining to anthracite coal, he said.

Orechovsky said young people are becoming increasingly interested in the coal mining industry and how it helped build a nation. He added that a lot of unmined anthracite coal still exists locally.

In addition to the coal-related memorabilia, festival attendees enjoyed homemade "Yogi's Pierogies," face painting, music from polka bands Joe Stanky and the Cadets and Eddie Derwin and the Polka Naturals, a tribute to Elvis by Josh Slosky, and a chance to win prizes by guessing the weight of coal.

One display provided by festival sponsor Casey-Kassa coal company drew interest from young people who were familiarizing themselves with the coal industry, said John "Yogi" Jagodzinski. The display showcased various types of equipment used in the mines and different types of locally mined coal.

Jagodzinski said the chamber decided to add the coal mining theme five years ago to enhance the festival and keep the memory of an important industry alive.



8/16/2009

### **Nanticoke/Newport aims for world title**

By Tom Brolle - Citizens' Voice

Bob Adams / The Sunday Voice The Nanticoke/Newport junior softball team begins play today in the World Series at 5:45 p.m in Kirkland, Wash

The Nanticoke/Newport junior league softball team was greeted with cheers and congratulatory signs as it was escorted through the streets of the two boroughs in a victory parade on Thursday night.

Just hours before, the girls made easy work in their semifinal and championship games in West Haven, Conn., to claim the East Regional title.

With a title after a week of softball in Connecticut, even a little rain couldn't damper the parade.

"They were really happy that they could come home for a day," coach Bill Rubasky said.

But the celebrations were short lived as Nanticoke/Newport quickly focused its attention to its next task: winning the World Series.

Nanticoke/Newport begins that journey today as it opens pool play at 5:45 against the Asia-Pacific winner, Makati City, Philippines, in Kirkland Wash.

Live coverage of every World Series game will be aired on [youthsportslive.com](http://youthsportslive.com).

Nanticoke/Newport's performance at the East Regional has given it plenty of confidence to go against the other best teams on the globe.

Nanticoke/Newport finished 8-0 at the East Regional behind strong pitching from Hannah Rubasky and Brooke Chapin. The team outscored its opponents 71-4 from big hits from players like Katie Kowalski, Maggie Gola and Sammy Gow.

"I expect us to do well," Bill Rubasky said. "They never quit, they work hard and they can do it."

After Thursday's celebration, the team had a quick turnaround as they headed back to Connecticut late Friday to catch their early Saturday morning flight out of Hartford.

Even after winning four tournaments - districts, sectionals, states and regionals - and another week of games in the Pacific time zone ahead, Rubasky isn't worried about his team slowing down.

"They're use to playing a lot and they've been playing a long time," he said. "Because they played high school ball and all the Little League games, I don't think that will bother them, the fatigue."

Rubasky said most of the girls have been playing softball since they were seven or eight years old.

The girls have been playing together for the last couple of years on the Little League and at Nanticoke Area, where the

girls will be freshmen and sophomores this fall.

"They're very close. You have to be when you spend six days on the road together," Rubasky said. "The one thing about them is that most of them are honor students. They're just a great group of kids."

Rubasky said he realized the team could make a run to the World Series after the team beat West Point, 1-0, in state championship.

Just two years earlier, West Point beat a Nanticoke/Newport team with many of the same players for the state title.

And last year, West Point made it all the way to the World Series.

After getting over the hump against West Point and its dominate showing at the East Regional, Nanticoke/Newport isn't ruling out anything at the World Series.

"I really think we can win because we play good defense, they get timely hits when we need them and they never give up," Rubasky said. "So yeah, I think we have a chance."

8/14/2009

### **Changes at GNA aim to improve academics**

#### **Students in fourth and fifth grades to switch classes for core subjects this year.**

With less than three weeks before the new school year starts, Greater Nanticoke Area School Board members learned Thursday night about measures being taken to help the students do better when classes resume Sept. 2.

School board member and Education Committee Chairman Tony Prushinski decided to change the way fourth- and fifth-graders learn their core subjects.

Starting this year, students at those two grade levels will have different teachers for core subjects, including English, math and reading.

He also updated fellow board members on progress made in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment program and the No Child Left Behind program.

The district's Elementary Education Center might be removed from the School Improvement I category under No Child Left Behind if children in grades two through five continue to improve their test scores during the 2009-10 school year, Prushinski said.

The Elementary Education Center was classified this year as making adequate yearly progress based on their PSSA scores, Prushinski said.

The district's Educational Center, with grades six and seven, was close behind as Prushinski said there was a "technicality" preventing that school from making adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind mandate.

This past year students in grades fourth through seventh improved their test scores in the PSSA tests.

"It does seem that things are improving much faster than I ever thought they could be," said Prushinski, who himself is a teacher in the Dallas School District.

Prushinski has been on the board for two years and has been critical of the school's previous test scores. He's worked with faculty and school administrators to find ways to improve scores.

Last year, many parents with children in the gifted program expressed frustration at the district not providing what they believed to be adequate academic challenges for their children.

Up until now the district has had teachers working with gifted program students only on a part-time basis.

Ryan Kearney, 24, of Archbald, was introduced as the full-time gifted teacher for students in grades two through six.

Filomena Mancuso will continue teaching the talented students in grades seven through 10, in addition to her home economics classes.

Kearney was a substitute teacher in the district last spring after graduating from college.

The district wants to continue helping students excel academically, so eight math and eight English SAT classes will be offered for high school juniors to help prepare them, Superintendent Tony Perrone said. The classes will be offered after school.

While much attention was given to academics during Thursday's meeting, board members also expressed their delight and offered congratulations to the Nanticoke-Newport Township softball girls that will play in the Little League Junior Softball World Series this weekend in Washington state.

This is the first time any of the district's softball teams have played in the World Series, said board member Kenny James, who oversees the sports department. The girls play a team from the Philippines on Sunday.

8/14/2009

### **In Nanticoke, miners' legacy honored**



mmcginley@timesleader.com

When some of the older attendees at last year's Coal Miners' Heritage Festival saw coal cars on display in Patriot Park, many "had tears in their eyes."

Elvis impersonator Josh Slaski will perform from 4-6 p.m. Saturday at Patriot Park as part of Coal Miners' Heritage Days.

"Most of our granddads worked in the mines," explained John "Yogi" Jagodzinski, one of the event organizers for this weekend's festival, which runs from 4:15 to 10:30 tonight, 4 to 10 p.m. Saturday and 2 to 9 p.m. Sunday in Patriot Park, Nanticoke.

Jagodzinski's father and uncle worked in the mines, and he can recall his uncle telling him all about it.

"He used to crawl for coal on his hands and knees," he said.

What began five years ago as a heritage festival is today dedicated specifically to coal miners.

"Nobody had a festival like that around here to honor them," Jagodzinski, of Wilkes-Barre Township, said.

One special part of this year's event is a Polka Mass at 3 p.m. Sunday that will not only honor coal miners but also Al "Jolly Joe" Truszkowski, known locally for leading polka group "Jolly Joe and the Bavarians."

Truszkowski, who was a fixture at the Nanticoke event each year, died in April, just days before he was expected to perform at the Cherry Blossom Festival in Kirby Park.

"He did a lot for the old-timers," Jagodzinski said. "I used to go to nursing homes with him. We used to sing (to the residents)."

A mini-procession during the Mass will include women dressed in old Polish outfits, guys dressed as coal miners and members of the Knights of Columbus.

Whatever day visitors choose, Jagodzinski, a member of the South Valley Chamber of Commerce, which is sponsoring the event, said it's a celebration for all ages.

While last year, Jagodzinski recalled, mostly older men and women attended, he thinks the festival is a great way for younger generations to learn about the past.

They can do so by checking out the heritage tent and seeing the old artifacts: helmets, lights, pieces of coal and other relics from the mines.

One of the best parts of the weekend is the coal-miner contest, in which the oldest coal miner will receive a trophy and a cash prize.

Last year's winner, then 94-year-old John Oshirak, has since died, so Jagodzinski can't anticipate who might win this year.

"(Oshirak) worked in the mines 30-35 years," he said.

About 15 people competed in the 2008 contest.

Besides all the heritage information, artifacts and the contest, plenty of entertainment and food are promised.

"We have polka on Friday and Sunday, then country rock on Saturday," the organizer explained.

A group of female dancers on Sunday will be dressed in clothing from the "Gone with the Wind" era, Jagodzinski said.

As for the food, nine vendors are expected to bring funnel cakes, sausage-and-pepper sandwiches, cheesesteaks, pizza, hot dogs, hamburgers, gyros, Belgian waffles, ice-cream sandwiches and root-beer floats.

Or, the binge eater can always take part in the pierogi-eating contest. About seven people gave it a go last year. The winner will get a cash prize.

"The first one to finish 18 gets the money," Jagodzinski said.

If you go

What: Coal Miners' Heritage Festival

Where: Patriot Park, Broad and Market Streets, Nanticoke

When: 4:15-10:30 tonight; 4-10 p.m. Saturday; 2-9 p.m. Sunday

More info: 735-6990

8/13/2009

**Stetz family thanks all who aided Chase's recovery**

Citizens' Voice

Editor:

Recently, our newborn son Chase needed care at Hershey Medical Center. By the grace of God and the medical staff, Chase made a full recovery. During these seven weeks the Ronald McDonald House opened their doors with kindness

and compassion. The students, faculty and administration of the Greater Nanticoke Area School District sent numerous donations. These efforts will be used towards the new expansion of the house and will help families in times of great need.

We would like to thank the many family, friends, co-workers and students who sent cards, prayers and support on a daily basis.

Also, a welcome-back party was organized by Lydia Brill and members of the G.N.A. faculty. This event displayed the true spirit of our home town and the people who make it so special. The Parkway Inn and its staff did a fantastic job. In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to CVS, Paston Kyle Gildner, First Primitive Methodist Church, our neighbors on Grand Street, 20 lb. Head, John and Amanda, Bonk's Bar, Green Street's, and those who attended, donated and volunteered at the benefit. Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

Ryan, Erika and Chase Stetz  
Nanticoke

8/12/2009

### **Nanticoke proposes 'host' ordinance**

### **Measure considered to hold older adults responsible for underage drinking at parties.**

slong@timesleader.com

City officials are considering an ordinance that would hold older adults responsible if underage young adults are allowed to drink at parties.

Adults hosting the parties – whether they're parents allowing a party in their own home or adults renting an apartment or commercial space – could face fines starting at \$300 for the first offense and \$1,000 for three or more violations if the parties get loud, unruly or out of control.

If such a party is hosted by someone under 21 years old, the parents or guardians of that person can be held responsible for the fines and fees associated with this "Social Host Accountability Ordinance."

The proposed ordinance, which will not become law until the city council passes it twice, defines "loud or unruly gatherings" as parties with two or more people gathering with excessive noise, excessive traffic, obstruction of public streets with crowds that are occupying the streets, public drunkenness, assaults, vandalism, littering or any other conduct that is a threat to public health and safety.

If police or other emergency service personnel are called to the scene, the appropriate adult could be also be required to pay a civil recovery fee to cover the expense of the emergency personnel responding if the personnel must respond to the property two or more times, the ordinance states.

The civil recovery fee will not be imposed if the situation requires an "actual emergency response," according to the ordinance.

This proposed law could come up for a vote during the council's next meeting on Aug. 19. Council could still revise some of the wording in the ordinance.

Councilman Joe Dougherty presented the proposed ordinance during the council's first meeting in early August after he heard about a similar ordinance when visiting family in Rhode Island last month.

"I just thought it would be a good way to make the community safer to protect the public health, safety and general welfare," Dougherty said.

City solicitor William Finnegan discovered another similar ordinance in California that the Nanticoke ordinance was modeled after. Finnegan was unaware of any other community in Luzerne County with a similar ordinance or with plans to implement such an ordinance.

District Attorney Jackie Musto-Carroll declined to speak about this specific proposed ordinance, but noted any law designed to assist in keeping alcohol out of the hands of people under 21 years old should be applauded.

"Any ordinance that promotes and reduces underage drinking is a step in the right direction," she said.

What's next?

Nanticoke council is expected to discuss this ordinance during its Aug. 19 meeting at City Hall, 15 E. Ridge St. The council might vote on this ordinance for the first time during that meeting. The ordinance must be read and approved twice before it becomes law.

8/7/2009

### **Nanticoke considers law to curb underage drinking**

By Robert Olsen - Citizens' Voice

A proposed ordinance by city Councilman Joe Dougherty on Wednesday will target property owners and parents in an effort to curb underage drinking, drinking parties and binge drinking.

The Social Host Accountability Ordinance is currently in draft format, Dougherty said, but is expected to be ready for a final vote at council's next regular meeting.

Dougherty said he first became aware of such an ordinance while out-of-state on vacation and, upon arriving home, spoke to Solicitor William Finnegan Jr. who then found another version of the ordinance with "more teeth."

Under the ordinance, property owners and/or parents will be fined but will also be charged for the use of any municipal services, such as police or fire, whose resources were called upon to handle the complaint.

In cases where a residence is rented, Finnegan believes the renter, not the actual property owner, would be the person responsible for all fines and charges, but said a more in-depth review of the ordinance is needed before anything can be finalized.

In cases where a minor hosts a drinking party it would be the parent or guardian who would be held liable for all fines and charges.

California already has a Social Host Ordinance in place in some districts. Under a Mariposa, Calif., ordinance, "whenever a person having control of the residence or premises is present at that residence or premises at the time that a minor obtains, possesses, or consumes any alcoholic beverage, it shall be prima facie evidence that such person had the knowledge or should have had the knowledge, that the minor obtained, possessed, or consumed an alcoholic beverage at the party."

Dougherty believes if the ordinance passes it would be the first of its kind in the state.

Council also approved the hiring of Pam Heard as the city's full-time finance director at a yearly salary of \$45,000. The position also comes with full benefits and two-week's vacation.

Heard, a public accountant, has worked with the city in the past.

"I'm very excited to be joining the city," Heard said.

A 90-percent reduction in city real estate taxes was approved by council for the Tree of Life Christian Fellowship parsonage.

According to city treasurer Albert Wytoshek, the reduction is similar to the one received by all of the churches within the city.

"We granted it to them last year too," Wytoshek said, "and they deserve it."

The reduction, which is actually a repayment, is equal to \$290.

8/6/2009

### **Nanticoke hires a finance director**

slong@timesleader.com

Pamela Heard was hired Wednesday night as the city's newest finance director after a unanimous vote by City Council. Heard, a certified public accountant, previously worked with the city as a contractor when it was considering whether to enter into the Act 47, financially distressed city status about three years ago.

"I am really excited. I think they (Nanticoke residents) have a great future and I am glad to be a part of it," Heard said.

She was chosen over two other candidates who were interviewed, Mayor John Bushko said. He said her previous experience working with the city's finances helped him decide she was the best candidate.

"I think she is an excellent candidate. She knows what's in those files," Bushko said.

Heard is taking over a job previously held by current City Administrator Holly Quinn, who worked under former city administrator Kenneth Johnson until he took another job last September.

Quinn was hired as city administrator last month by council.

Heard will be responsible for preparing and interpreting the financial reports, presenting those to council as needed, paying bills, writing applications for grants and preparing budgets, Quinn said.

Heard has been working the Albert B. Melone Co., a finance firm that works with several cities and school districts throughout the county. In her new role, she will earn \$45,000 a year as a full-time finance director with full medical benefits and two weeks paid vacation.

In other business, resident Carl Larson asked council members to form a resident review board that can investigate complaints about police officers. Lawson said he had been having problems with one officer.

Bushko asked if Larson had talked to police Chief James Cheshinski about a complaint. Larson said he had.

Cheshinski was unavailable for comment Wednesday night.

In other business, Councilman Joe Dougherty introduced a proposed ordinance that would hold people responsible if someone hosts an underage drinking party.

He asked fellow council members to review the draft of the Social Host Accountability Ordinance so it could be discussed at a future meeting.



8/5/2009

**Best in class: Nanticoke/Newport**

Matt Van Stone - Citizens' Voice

## " CONGRATULATIONS FROM NANTICOKE CITY"

Dave Scherbenco / The Citizens' Voice

Winning pitcher Hannah Rubasky (00) celebrates with teammates after win over West Point for the state championship.

When the sun goes down and the lights come on, the stars shine the brightest. Tuesday night at Kubis Field was no exception as Nanticoke/Newport defeated West Point 1-0 to capture the Pennsylvania Junior League softball championship.

It was the closest call Nanticoke-Newport had in the tournament. In fact, prior to a 7-3 win over Radnor in its opener on Tuesday, Nanticoke Newport had scored double digits in all of its games.

"I wish we could have had a couple runs from some of the other games," Nanticoke/Newport coach Bill Rubasky joked. Pitching and defense took over in the championship.

Hannah Rubasky threw a complete game, two-hitter while Katie Kawalski drove in the game's lone run and made two spectacular diving catches in left field.

"All week we had a couple muffs every game," coach Rubasky said. "Tonight they just outdid themselves. It was the time we needed it."

Nanticoke/Newport scored the game's only run in the top of the first when Sammy Gow singled to left and was bunted to second by Ari Grabowski. Katie Kowalski followed with a triple to deep right, adding to an already productive tournament.

"It feels really good," Kawalski said. "I was slumping for a bit there but I was able to break out of it - and in a big game."

The first-inning run was all Hannah Rubasky needed as she baffled West Point hitters all night. West Point was only able to muster first and third-inning singles off the Nanticoke/Newport righty, who faced just three batters over the minimum.

"My curveball and my screwball worked really well for me today," Hannah Rubasky said. "The team did really well and we didn't make a single error today."

It wasn't all smooth sailing for Nanticoke/Newport, though. Juystne Falbo singled to lead off the West Point half of the first and was bunted over to second by Maddie Knitzer.

With a runner in scoring position, Kowalski made a shoestring, sliding grab to keep the runner at bay.

"I don't even know what to say about Katie," coach Rubasky said. "She's like Superwoman out there."

Nanticoke/Newport survived another scare with one out in the seventh when Lizzy Dougherty tracked down a fly ball from Hope Pehrson at the center field warning track.

Pehrson was the hard-luck loser for West Point, hurling six innings, allowing five hits with seven strikeouts.

Rubasky fanned Marisa Larkin to end the game and the celebratory dogpile followed-it was just the beginning however.

The town of Nanticoke will hold a parade today at 6 in honor of the state champs, who will regroup and begin regional play Friday in West Haven, Conn.

8/5/2009

**Planning board OKs LCCC building plans**

**Construction likely to begin within month for long-awaited culinary arts institute.**

slong@timesleader.com

An agreement to allow Mark Construction Services to build the Culinary Arts Institute for Luzerne County Community

College moved forward Tuesday when two members of the Nanticoke Planning Commission approved the engineering plans.

The approval was conditional, based on the development company receiving letters from the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority noting it would provide sewage treatment.

Also, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection must approve WVSA as the treatment facility, officials said.

Commission solicitor Mark McNealis went over questions raised in a letter from Leonard Engineering, which the city hired to review the construction company's engineering work.

Pasonick Engineering is the city's engineer and under most cases would have also served as the commission's engineer, but could not in this instance because Pasonick was hired by Mark Construction Services to serve as its engineer.

Most of the questions raised by Leonard Engineering were typographical fixes, including adding a symbol noting the northern direction on one page of the architectural plans.

Planning Commission Chairman John Grontkowski and member Steve Wanchisen asked a few other questions regarding parking and water flow and water pressure during the 30-minute meeting.

William Rinaldi, president of Mark Construction Services, did not attend the meeting. Architect Scott Douglas Allen of SDA Architects in Scranton and Pasonick Engineer Thomas Barna attended the meeting on Rinaldi's behalf to answer the board members' questions.

Barna told Grontkowski the site contained adequate storm water drains and fire hydrants.

The storm water drains are tied into the city's existing pipes to prevent any possible flooding issues.

The hydrants are "within 50 feet" of the building and would provide enough water pressure if the fire department needed to tap into those lines, Barna said.

Wanchisen expressed concern over the lack of parking spaces for the facility.

There would be no parking at the site, so people entering the institute will have to use other parking lots in town.

Wanchisen pointed out there is not much parking available in the Weis Grocery store parking lot down the street.

McNealis explained the planning board approves engineering plans to make sure there is adequate sewer, water and other utilities to service the building.

The commission does not have the power to address parking issues. Those issues must be decided by the zoning board and city council. McNealis said he will make note in his letter of approval that the commission strongly urged the city to review the parking situation for this site.

Grontowski explained he didn't want anyone in the future to think they had not considered all possible issues and scenarios for the location.

"You guys always raise good issues, but sometimes it must be handled by others," McNealis said.

Barna said the plans will be submitted to Nanticoke Fire Chief Michael Bohan for his approval before any work begins on the site.

The institute, which will include a clock tower, will sit on the corner of Main and Market streets after the former Nanticoke Senior Citizens Center and the Susquehanna Coal Company building are torn down.

Allen said they hope to begin tearing down the buildings and start construction within the next month.

Then it will typically take nine to 12 months to finish the building before the college can move in, he said.

8/4/2009

### **Nanticoke/Newport advances to state semifinals**

By Jill Snowdon - Citizens' Voice

Nanticoke/Newport's junior softball team gave up three runs and a little momentum in the bottom of the second inning against Radnor on Monday, but it made enough of a recovery to advance to the semifinals of the Junior State Tournament.

Nanticoke/Newport held Radnor scoreless through the remaining five innings, regained the lead and advanced with a 7-3 win at Kubis Field.

With a 3-0 record, Nanticoke/Newport will play at 4 today against the loser of the Greenville/Warrior Run contest. The winner advances to the state title game, which will be held tomorrow at 8.

"We held together after that bad inning," Nanticoke/Newport coach Bill Rubasky said. "We didn't play perfect softball, but they are playing together and they did a nice job of regrouping and refocusing."

Nanticoke/Newport took an early 1-0 lead in the first. Sammy Gow led off the game with a triple and scored on a wild pitch. In the top of the second Nanticoke/Newport grabbed a 3-0 lead with Gabby Grabowski and Sarah Higgins scoring

runs.

Radnor scored three runs with two outs in the bottom of the inning to even the score at three.

Nanticoke/Newport, however, quickly regained control. Lizzy Dougherty singled and Heather Perkowski made good on her first at-bat as she drove in Dougherty for the go-ahead run.

Defensively, Hannah Rubasky and Brooke Chapin split time on the mound and kept things in order. Rubasky faced just four batters in the third and fourth innings, while Chapin entered in the fifth and struck out four, while walking just one. Gow also turned in a fine defensive effort, in addition to her two hits on offense. She had a pair of back-to-back putouts in the fifth inning and tossed a quick throw to third baseman Maggie Gold to prevent Radnor from getting in scoring position in the seventh.

"We make mistakes but we always pick each other up," Gow said. "We've been playing together for so long now that we know we can count on each other for support. And we're going to do whatever it takes to win a title."

Nanticoke/Newport went up 5-3 in the fifth with Gola leading off with a single and scoring on an error. Ashley Horashock scored on Katie Kowalski's bunt single in the sixth inning and Kowalski came in on Gola's double for a 7-3 advantage.

7/25/2009

**LCCC's downtown expansion hits snag  
Project moving forward, but it's taking longer than officials expected.**

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Luzerne County Community College officials originally dreamed that students would be attending classes in downtown Nanticoke this year.

Well, that date has been pushed back a little bit. The proposed Health Sciences Center is slated to open in spring 2011 at the former Kanjorski Center on East Main Street, and the proposed Culinary Arts Institute is slated to open next fall just blocks away at the corner of Main and Market streets.

The latest delays are the result of contract negotiations and questions regarding the coal company building's historical status.

When plans for the college expanding into downtown were originally announced in September 2007, the Health Sciences Center was to be opened this January and the Culinary Arts Institute was to be opened this fall.

Culinary, Nursing and Health Sciences students will continue attending classes in their current facilities on the main campus until the new buildings are opened, LCCC President Tom Leary said.

He is not disappointed in the time delay because he wants to ensure these projects are done right to fit the college's future needs.

"Any time you are engaged in something that is this important, it is vital to get it right, not just get it done quickly. We have spent time with faculty and staff meeting with architects to make sure the design (of both buildings) is in the best interests of the students," Leary said.

Legal staffs from the college and the developer, Mark Construction Company, are hammering out the remaining details of a contract that calls for the college to construct the institute. Leary hopes the contract will be ready for the Board of Trustees' review soon.

The building projects, which are in the final design phase, are now moving forward as expected, said Joe Grilli, LCCC's vice president charged with external affairs and planning.

Demolition on the inside of the Kanjorski Center should begin in three weeks, with the work taking up to three months as the office building is transformed into a new home for the college's Nursing and Health Sciences Department, Grilli said.

During that time, engineering on the renovation will be completed, so workers then can move forward in renovating the building to create a 24-seat dental clinic, classrooms, simulation bays, respiratory therapy lab, lung function lab and other programs.

The college is leasing the building from the Nanticoke Municipal Authority for about \$290,000 a year for seven years. Board members have the option to purchase the building at the end of the lease.

Once the former Nanticoke Senior Citizens Center and the Susquehanna Coal Company building are demolished, the Culinary Arts Institute will be built on the site.

The state-of-the-art culinary institute is scheduled have a demonstration kitchen, two modern kitchen labs with individualized work stations and a pastry arts lab.

There is not a demolition date for the former senior citizens center or coal building because Mark Construction

Company has not yet purchased the properties.

William Rinaldi, the construction company's chief executive officer, did not return calls seeking comment.

The sale of both buildings was supposed to be completed on July 10.

Nanticoke Mayor John Bushko has been supportive of the projects, but notes he is a little frustrated that it is taking so long to come to fruition.

He said he thought both projects would be under construction by now and now he's worried the cash-strapped city might have to renew its liability insurance policy on the senior citizens center if it is not sold and demolished soon.

City officials signed an agreement last July to sell the 6,650-square-foot building to Rinaldi's company for \$250,000.

Nanticoke City Administrator Holly Quinn said once the money is received, it will be earmarked for the city's capital projects.

The Nanticoke Housing Authority is expecting to receive about \$80,000 for the coal building after the authority agreed to sell the property to Rinaldi for the development.

Authority solicitor Vito DeLuca said the board doesn't expect to make any money on the sale, but rather recoup the expenses it incurred when the authority tried to acquire grant money to renovate the historic building into apartments.

After reviewing the coal building property, which was once home to the Susquehanna Coal Company's corporate offices, it would be eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, said Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission spokesman Kirk Wilson.

State Rep. John Yudichak's office has been working with the state historical commission to resolve any possible issues that might arise because of the building's demolition.

The commission's first inclination is for preservation, but because the coal building has sustained damage from a fire – in addition to water and pigeon damage over the years – it is beyond rehabilitation, Yudichak said.

“We want to preserve the coal building history the best we can, while we build a new history for the city of Nanticoke.

We always intended to reflect the architectural motif in the new culinary arts building,” he said.

The commission knows not all historic buildings can be saved, so the commission's Bureau of Historic Preservation has been in contact with the developer to ask that the building be photographed and a description of the building be written to “preserve the memory of the building” for future generations, Wilson said.

“Sometimes we realize that is financially impossible to restore a facility. So if it is demolished there would still be proof it existed and information for the future,” Wilson said.

Yudichak is confident the documents and photographs detailing the building will be in capable hands at the Nanticoke Historical Society, and there will be a chance to display some artifacts from the coal building in the new culinary arts building.

The building projects, which are in the final design phase, are now moving forward as expected, said Joe Grilli, LCCC's vice president charged with external affairs and planning. Demolition on the inside of the Kanjorski Center should begin in three weeks.

7/23/2009

**Nanticoke municipal workers sweltering, but cool relief is on way**

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City officials are awaiting the arrival of parts to repair the municipal building's three-decade-old air-conditioning unit. The unit has been out for a couple of weeks, making the early 1970s-era glass-sheathed building uncomfortable on days when the sun beats into the two-story facility.

The city is using a fan to keep everyone cool until the repair is made, City Administrator Holly Quinn said.

The city hired Penn State Mechanical of Wilkes-Barre to fix the problems in the HVAC system, which have affected the main floor of the building, which includes District Judge Donald Whitaker's office, city offices and the police department in the building's basement.

Penn State Mechanical quoted the city a cost of \$4,994. That's a savings of roughly \$1,000, Public Works Foreman Walter Pavelitz said, after two other contractors offered higher quotes to fix the two separate HVAC units.

Finding parts for the unit that is original to the building is sometimes a problem because the unit is so old.

The city also hired Rite Temp Mechanical Contractors of Dalton as part of an annual maintenance program for \$1,596 to inspect the HVAC unit twice a year, clean the coils and replace belts as necessary.

“Even if we have breakdowns, maybe it won't be as costly,” Pavelitz said, comparing this to a person having medical check-ups to spot illnesses before they become serious.

Since the city was declared an Act 47 financially distressed city in May 2006, officials have been watching how much

they spend as they try to increase revenue.

Pavelitz said he couldn't begin to guess the cost of replacing the entire air-conditioning unit.

7/18/2009

## **Nanticoke hospital toasts 100 years**

**First opened to serve coal miners, facility evolved as community's needs changed.**

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Medical services in Nanticoke have come a long way since 1905 when a makeshift hospital began operating out of the old city hall at Broad and Walnut streets during a typhoid epidemic.

Four years later the Nanticoke Hospital opened its doors to care for coal miners and their families; 100 years later a hospital continues to provide medical coverage on the same plot of land.

To commemorate the centennial, hospital administrators, staff and former workers will gather for a Mass at 2 p.m. Sunday at St. Stanislaus Church in Nanticoke and immediately after attend a sold-out dinner reception at Luzerne County Community College's Educational Conference Center.

Over the past century the hospital has dealt with overcrowding, a drop in the number of admissions, financial struggles and faced possible permanent closure in 1989.

But the state worked to find a private health care company to run the hospital, which had a \$3.5 million deficit and only served a handful of patients. Mercy Health Partners and Catholic Healthcare Partners began leasing the facility from the State Department of Public Welfare on July 1, 1990.

The hospital now runs on a nearly \$16 million annual budget and about an 80 percent of its 40 beds are typically occupied. Current Hospital Administrator Bob Williams said the hospital plans to continue providing health coverage in the community for years to come.

"As the need changes in the community, we will change with the needs of the public. It is a testimony to the people who have worked in this facility since it opened. A dedicated staff, devoted physicians and the support of the community made it possible," Williams said.

The hospital began as a way to provide emergency health care to the men who worked in six collieries in the region. Several men – four of them from the coal miner unions and three coal mining bosses – met in F.H. Kohlbraker's office in May 1907 to form the Nanticoke Hospital Association, according to historical documents from the Nanticoke Historical Society.

Kohlbraker worked as superintendent of the Susquehanna Coal Company and his firm donated about three acres for the hospital to be built upon. A dedication program and parade was held on Oct. 12, 1909 as the city and its residents celebrated the opening of the \$70,000, three-story brick hospital that boasted 20 beds in the male ward, 10 beds in the female ward, eight beds in a special burn ward and seven private rooms.

Needs grew

The hospital became the Nanticoke State General Hospital in 1912 after Pennsylvania state Rep. W. Bruce Good wrote a bill directing Gov. John K. Tener to appoint a commission to consider running the hospital.

Within a few years of its opening, the hospital was experiencing severe overcrowding with 35 patients turned away in July and August 1914.

One hundred patients could be cared for at the hospital after several additions were completed in the 1910s and 1950s. Anne Rushin, 98, worked as a nurse for 28 years after graduating from the hospital's nursing school program in 1933. She vividly remembered her work serving mostly in the outpatient department and having to be on call to help prep patients for surgery.

"I enjoyed it. I had a variety of duties in the outpatient department," Rushin said, noting that in 1934 nurses worked 12-hour days with a three-hour break and were paid \$5 daily plus room and board. She lived with other nurses in dormitory-style housing on the grounds, so they could be there quickly in case of an emergency.

Rushin recalled how a few years after graduating, she was called to Hunlock Creek to help care for adults and children when a bridge collapsed, sending 10 people to the hospital.

Rushin retired from the hospital in 1962 and went to work at Valley Crest nursing home where she worked in the admissions department for 18 years until 1979.

In the 1950s, the hospital began offering services for mental health and mental retardation through the Nanticoke-Hazleton Mental Health/Mental Retardation Center. Now Northeast Counseling Services provides inpatient and outpatient behavioral health programs. The hospital operated an emergency room, had a maternity ward and opened an eight-bed intensive care unit in the 1970s.



When Mercy Hospital took over operations it removed the ER, maternity ward and ICU, but made other substantial improvements to improve acute health care.

### **Acute-care facility**

The hospital became Northeastern Pennsylvania's first acute-care hospital, in the mid-1990s to care for patients in a more extended stay setting. Many patients now spend an average of 25 days in Mercy Special Care Hospital utilizing the inpatient and outpatient services of wound care, rehabilitation, behavioral health, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, lab work and x-rays, Williams said.

Mercy continues to stay on top of innovative health care, Williams said as he proudly pointed out the hospital was the first in Luzerne County to install a hyperbaric chamber.

Patients with wounds that won't heal are enclosed in a chamber that bathes them in pure oxygen to promote healing. Within the last year the hospital has renovated its basement, moving the rehabilitation services center to the first floor as room was made for the Nanticoke senior center, the Rose Tucker Center at Mercy.

In yet another first for the hospital, this is the first senior citizen center in Northeastern Pennsylvania to enter into a health-based partnership with a hospital, according to Luzerne County Bureau of Aging Director Mary Beth Farrell.

### **100 years of serving the community**

May 1907: Nanticoke Hospital Association formed

April 1908: Association accepted plans for new hospital building

September 1908: Ground broken for new building

Oct. 12, 1909: Grand opening of Nanticoke Hospital – a celebration and parade were held

Oct. 21, 1909: First patient, Alfred Inoscenti, was released after being treated for a brain concussion.

Oct. 22, 1909: First operation performed on Mrs. Sura Allen of Glen Lyon for a stomach condition. Allen, 21, died Oct. 24 from complications.

May 1912: State of Pennsylvania takes over control and ownership of hospital

1957: \$1.25 million renovation at hospital included a three-story wing and basement. Other additions included a laundry center, boiler room and a mental health unit on the south side of the building

1970s: An eight-bed Intensive Care Unit is added

June 30, 1990: Nanticoke State General Hospital closed its doors

July 1, 1990: Mercy Hospital Nanticoke opens

1994: Emergency room closed

2004: Hospital installs first hyperbaric chamber in Luzerne County used for wound treatment

2008: The rehabilitation center was moved from the basement to the first floor during renovations to make room for Nanticoke's Senior Citizens' Center in the hospital's basement

March: Grand opening of Rose Tucker Center at Mercy in honor of late county Commissioner Rose Tucker.

Sources: Nanticoke Historical Society, Mercy Special Care Hospital

7/17/2009

### **Official: Nanticoke's finances looking good**

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With only two council members and the mayor present, city council had a quick 31-minute meeting Wednesday night in which officials were updated on the city's finances and two street projects.

Presenting the financial report, City Administrator Holly Quinn noted the city is pretty much on target with financial matters, so far this year.

"Most of our income is in good shape," she told Mayor John Bushko and council members Joe Dougherty and Jon Metta.

By the end of June, the city had received \$1,220,614 in earned income tax revenue or 63.57 percent of the estimated total for 2009. This is important for the Act 47 city because it struggled with income tax revenue coming in last year. Fines and forfeitures fees were a little low, with the city generating only 2,097 or 34.97 percent of the total budgeted amount.

Quinn believes that later this year the city will generate more money, "which will be a shot in the arm," from permit fees and the landlord license fee.

The city has generated \$2,395,123 in revenues, spent about 50 percent of that or \$1,546,234, and has an income of \$830,888, of as June 30, Quinn said.

She also reported that the city also has \$760,637 in its general fund balance as of Wednesday.

The council voted unanimously to hire Michael J. Pasonick Jr. and Associates of Wilkes-Barre as the city's engineer for its downtown streetscape project. Mayor Bushko has a vote on council and voted along with the two attending council members.

Council members Brent Makarczyk and Jim Litchkofski and City Treasurer Al Wytoshek were absent.

Engineer Daryl Pawlush of Pasonick informed council that he, Quinn and Dougherty met Tuesday with Pennsylvania Department of Transportation officials to get the K-routes street project and the downtown streetscape project moving forward.

The K-route project is scheduled to receive a final review by PennDOT on Monday, Pawlush said. He added that his firm would have a representative at the state offices to answer any questions and make any changes deemed necessary by PennDOT to move the project forward.

The project using federal funds has already been on hold for five years because of changes in the engineering work, Bushko said. Construction on the streetscape project is supposed to happen next year.

7/2/2009

**Grant enables Mercy to upgrade  
Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke gets \$381,000 from federal government.**

slong@timesleader.com

Mercy Special Care Hospital will use a \$381,000 grant from the federal government to fund a portion of the hospital's capital upgrades in Nanticoke and at its satellite hospital in Scranton.

"Receiving this grant money allows us to purchase the equipment we need and that our patients and staff need to provide safety, quality in-patient care," said Bob Williams, hospital administrator.

The planned purchases include 67 state-of-the art computerized beds, wheelchairs, tables and chairs to be used in the rooms to ensure the safety of patients and staff. After the money was secured in mid-March, the hospital purchased 20 of the beds and plans to purchase the remainder soon.

The Nanticoke hospital can accommodate 47 patients for short-term rehabilitation and Scranton has 20 beds.

Cabinets will also be added to some rooms to provide extra storage for equipment and supplies.

Williams said the beds are a great investment because patients can be weighed without getting out of bed and be lowered to help patients get out of the bed, reducing the number of falls. The beds also will benefit the nursing staff because they can be moved more easily and allow patients to be repositioned with less difficulty during medical treatments.

Mercy Special Care is the only hospital in Luzerne County to receive this much funding this year from the federal government, said U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Nanticoke. He said federal awards were based on what agencies need assistance the most to improve the community's life.

"Down here, it was determined to improve the quality of life by improving the place that most patients spend the most time – the bed by making it more comfortable for them and more useful," Kanjorski said.

Mercy Health Partners President and Chief Operating Officer Kevin Cook said this project is part of the hospital's ongoing commitment to Nanticoke as it continues to renovate the hospital.

"We understand that for a community to care about a hospital, the hospital has to demonstrate its care for the community one patient at a time, one day at a time, one interaction at a time," Cook said.

The Nanticoke hospital has been run and operated by Mercy Health Partners since 1994. For 75 years prior to that, the hospital was a state-run facility created to care for coal miners.

7/2/2009

**Nanticoke OKs police contract  
Council also appoints new city administrator, hires six part-time employees.**

slong@timesleader.com

Council members were busy but swift during Wednesday night's meeting, at which they approved the police officers' contract, appointed a new permanent city administrator and hired six part-time employees.

Council unanimously approved a collective bargaining agreement with the police department.

Under the contract, officers will receive nine paid holidays instead of 13, start paying a portion of their health care premiums next year, and the city will offer incentive bonuses for officers who do not use sick days, said Councilman Brent Makarczyk, who served as the city's negotiator.

Police officers will also receive a slight pay raise every year during the next four years that the contract is in effect. "There are some burdens on the police department, but I don't think it is overbearing. I believe it is something they can live with on a rising scale. There is also compensation in place to keep up with that expense. The city is not paying for everything 100 percent; they are paying for some of the costs," Makarczyk said, calling the contract fair and a good compromise. He thanked the officers for recognizing the city is in a deep financial crisis that it's trying to work itself out of.

Immediate copies of the contract were not available for review because lawyers for both sides have to finish up the paperwork, which could take a few days. Once the paperwork is finished, the contract will be made available to the public.

The previous police officers contract expired at the end of December 2008.

Finance Director Holly Quinn was named full-time permanent city administrator after Mayor John Bushko made a motion to hire her.

Bushko cited the great work Quinn has done as interim city administrator since last September, when former City Administrator Kenneth Johnson resigned to take a position closer to his home in Northumberland County. Since Johnson's resignation, the city has interviewed several applicants for the jobs.

Quinn's new salary is not yet known. The council unanimously approved her appointment.

She said she will start working on an advertisement to fill her former finance director position.

Six people – five in the public works department and one in the clerical department – were unanimously hired as part-time employees.

Mary Pepon will work from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. five days a week in the code enforcement office as a clerk. Sean Kearny, Kevin Zwotek, Robert Marr, Judith Zaykoski and Mike Swicklick will work about five hours a day, three days a week as needed in the public works department, cutting grass and clearing debris around town.

All six will earn \$8 per hour and will not be eligible to receive any health or vacation benefits because of their part-time status.

7/2/2009

### **Bishop announces priest changes**

Mark Guydish - Times Leader

Bishop Joseph Martino announced extensive appointments of clergy throughout the diocese, with substantial shuffling in Luzerne County. Here is how the changes affect area churches.

**Rev. William Langan will leave his post as pastor at St. Francis of Assisi and St. Joseph, Nanticoke, to be pastor at St. John the Evangelist and St. Mary Magdalen, Honesdale. Rev. James Nash, current pastor of four other Nanticoke Parishes, will add St. Francis and St. Joseph to his list.**

[The diocesan list of changes is here.](#)

6/18/2009

### **Nanticoke schools do not hike taxes**

### **Board hires gifted-education teacher; to check information regarding football coach.**

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In a long and busy meeting Wednesday, the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board approved a budget with no tax increase, hired a gifted-education teacher who board members promised would improve a program one parent criticized, and promised to arrange a meeting to check allegations from another parent contending the head football coach gave false information on his resume.

Business Consultant Al Melone said the budget for 2009-10 would spend about \$25 million while keeping property taxes at the same rate as this year, though the countywide reassessment will make bills look different.

Reassessment – the first in four decades – dramatically increased the market value of properties throughout the county. As a result, the millage rate, or the amount of taxes paid for every \$1,000 of assessed value, dropped sharply in every district.

In Greater Nanticoke Area, the millage rate under the old assessment was 255. Under the new assessment it will be 9.9295.

Melone noted the district recently learned a former special-education student was returning to the district and required education while hospitalized. By law, the district must provide the services, and Melone estimated the cost for one year

at \$183,000.

While the state and other sources would offset that, the district will probably end up paying about \$125,000. The board also hired a full-time gifted teacher, and told one parent who rose to criticize the program that the new employee coupled with new training for administrators and teachers should improve the program substantially. And the board heard allegations from parent David Kotz regarding football coach Lou Cella. Kotz and other parents criticized Cella's treatment of students last year, and Kotz had previously claimed Cella had put false information on his resume, but had been reassured the information had been checked. Kotz told the board Wednesday he had called schools where Cella claimed to have coached, and had been told the claim was inaccurate. Kotz also said the people he talked to said no one from Greater Nanticoke Area had called them regarding Cella. Cella was not at the meeting. Board President Bob Ranieri said he would arrange a meeting with Cella, Kotz and the board's athletic committee to review the allegations.

6/7/2009

### **Local ghost-hunting group shares investigations live on the Web**

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From the comfort of their home, people all over the world can watch David Conklin Jr. and the group he and his brothers founded, Pennsylvania Valley Paranormal Association. Whenever the ghost-hunting club searches for spirits that haunt Northeastern Pennsylvania, Conklin sets up a Web cam, and streams the adventure over the Internet for anybody logging on to the group's Web site to see. Saturday night, the group was set to do a live investigation and use a web cam to capture their findings. "I wanted to bring people into what we do, to share our experience with people outside of the group," said Conklin, 37, of Nanticoke. The Pennsylvania Valley Paranormal Association started about a year ago, after Conklin and his brothers were inspired by the TV show "Ghost Hunters," to look for paranormal activity on their own. Conklin and his brothers, Eric and Jeff, visited the Avondale Historical Site, where 110 men and boys were killed in a 1869 mining accident. Conklin remembers doubting the group would find evidence of paranormal activity, until he heard a loud bark in his ear at the Avondale Mine Site. Conklin couldn't believe it, so he checked the audio recorder when he got home. He didn't hear the bark on the audio recording. But from the video recording, it was undeniable. The noise was there, without an easy explanation. Next, the group investigated a hair salon in Wilkes-Barre. There, they encountered a high reading on the group's Electromagnetic Field reader. When Conklin asked if anyone wanted to say a hello, a brief "no," answered him back. Skeptical at first about the existence of ghosts, Conklin has come to believe they may exist. "I believe there are sources of energy. Energy can never die," Conklin said. "Maybe they are trying to contact lost family members." Usually during investigations, the group looks for any evidence that might prove ghosts do not exist. This is called "debunking." For instance, an unexplained door slamming shut could be caused by a worn-out hinge; creaking floorboards might be to blame for mysterious sounds, said Eric Conklin, 30, of Nanticoke. Many groups in paranormal societies look to "debunk" evidence before claiming that it is a ghost. "Right now, I'm somewhat on the fence whether (paranormal activity) does or doesn't exist. I'm hoping there is something else out there," Eric Conklin said. Earlier this year, Conklin had the idea to broadcast his group's investigations over the Internet. He found two web sites, Ustream ([www.ustream.tv](http://www.ustream.tv)) and JustinTV ([www.justin.tv](http://www.justin.tv)), that anybody can use for free to stream live video. After a period of trial and error, Conklin got the live video to work with help from his brothers. So far, the most viewers their live show had was 23, when the Pennsylvania Valley Paranormal Association paired up with Bob Christopher and NEPA Paranormal to examine the Cliff Park Inn in Milford. Conklin has seen the number of viewers increase each subsequent time, and they've had viewers from as faraway as Florida and North Carolina. "I try to educate people as we're doing our investigations," Conklin said. "There are some people who believe and some people who are entirely skeptical. But I feel there is something else out there we can't explain." The Internet has served as a valuable tool for those researching paranormal activity. Conklin and the Pennsylvania Valley Paranormal Association have gotten in touch with other paranormal groups through the Web, allowing them to look at each other's work and sometimes meet up and work together. Pennsylvania Valley Paranormal Association

hunted ghosts with groups from as close by as Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton to as faraway as Ohio. Northeastern Pennsylvania seems to be a hot bed for paranormal groups. Paranormal research groups in the area include Pennsylvania Valley Paranormal Association, NEPA Paranormal, Hazleton Paranormal Society and Luzerne County Ghost Hunters. Conklin doesn't see the groups as competing. He hopes they can work together as much as possible to find hauntings in the Wyoming Valley and beyond.

6/6/2009

**Nanticoke Music Fest kicks off this weekend**

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The 2009 Nanticoke Music Fest will take place two days this year instead of the normal three. But that doesn't mean there will be any less fun for the kids or good time rock 'n' roll for people of all ages. Though in year's past the Music Fest had a theme, in 2009 the organizing committee was just looking to feature music in the park for everyone to enjoy.

J.D. Verazin said the committee will bring back a few bands that were big hits last year — Elvis tribute artist Brad Crum, the Cadillacs and Eddie Day and the Starfires, featuring state Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski.

Nanticoke Music Fest 2009 will take place tonight and Saturday at Patriot Park in Nanticoke.

Performances tonight start at 5 p.m. with Nanticoke's own, The Nameless, followed by Crum at 6 p.m. and the Cadillacs at 8 p.m. On Saturday, the winners of "Ed Center Idol" will perform from 4 to 5p.m., followed by country act Farmer's Daughter from 5to 8 p.m. Eddie Day and the Starfires will headline on Saturday with a performance from 8 to 11 p.m.

The events are free to the public.

Verazin usually books the bands for the Nanticoke Music Fest. He said this year the committee decided to cut back because of the economy. They thought they might not get as much money from sponsors this year, and the committee wants to offer the event at no cost.

While picking the bands, Verazin tried to focus on crowd-pleasers and old favorites, so the two day event will still draw people to Nanticoke. In addition to the music, there will be food, kiddie rides, games and a dunk tank, where kids can soak their teachers or the soon-to-be mayor of Nanticoke Joe Dougherty.

"It is just for people getting together to have fun. The reason we have it is to show people we have a nice town, and to bring people in from other places," Verazin said.

One highlight of the event will be the performances by the 12 winners of "Ed Center Idol," which was held at the Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Center this past winter. Verazin served as a judge for the "American Idol"-inspired event, and he promises talented performances from Greater Nanticoke Area sixth- and seventh-graders.

Even though the economy cut the third day from Nanticoke Music Fest 2009, the organizers still expect people to come to the city and have a great time.

"People enjoy it. They look forward to it every year," Verazin said.

6/5/2009

**Take note: Music Fest is coming to Nanticoke**

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For Yvonne Bozinski, it's about seeing the expressions on the faces in the crowd.

"A lot of people bring their own chairs and sit there and enjoy the music," Bozinski said. "Every year people come up and say, 'This is the best music festival we've ever had.' "

Tonight and tomorrow, Patriot Park in Nanticoke will be filled with music, games and food (everything from hot dogs and french fries to pierogies and steak sandwiches), as part of the 12th annual Nanticoke Music Fest.

"And there's a wonderful ice-cream vendor who's usually very busy," Bozinski, director of special events for the city of Nanticoke, said.

Performers include the Star Fires, Brad Crum as Elvis, country band Farmer's Daughter, the Cadillacs and finalists from the Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Center's Idol 2009 contest.

"Last year, just as we were setting up, there was a very strong, summer storm coming through town, and as we were setting up we were inundated with wind, rain, you name it," said Roger Griffith, bassist for the Star Fires, a band popular 40 years ago that resurfaced about five years ago and plays 1950s and '60s rock.

"It lasted an hour, so by the time we started playing, everyone who had taken cover started coming back," he said, noting his group typically brings out about 500 or more people.

“They played last year on a Saturday, and I just looked at the crowd singing and said ‘Isn’t this nice?’ ” Bozinski said. The Star Fires play music from artists such as Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Beach Boys, Mitch Rider, Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry and Chubby Checker, just to name a few.

This year there was a high demand for a country-western band so Farmer’s Daughter was added to the bill, Bozinski said.

The event began as a way to attract the community to Patriot Park, which, at the time, had recently been revitalized thanks to efforts by the city’s Civic Pride Organization.

Bozinski said money left over is used to put on a Halloween parade and party and have a Christmas-in-the-park celebration with a special visit by Santa Claus.

“It’s nice to go to Nanticoke because the people there are just very friendly and appreciate the music fest so much,” said Griffith, whose group regularly performs at the Harveys Lake Fire Company Dance and the Luzerne County Fair.

If you go

What: 2009 Nanticoke Music Fest

Where: Patriot Park, Broad and Market streets, Nanticoke

When: 5-11 tonight; 4-11 p.m. Saturday

Cost: Free

Schedule:

Friday:

5 p.m.: opening ceremonies

6-8 p.m.: Brad Crum as Elvis

8-11 p.m.: Cadillacs

Saturday:

4-5 p.m.: Local “Idol” performers

5-8 p.m.: Farmer’s Daughter

8-11 p.m.: Star Fires

6/4/2009

**Contractors face test, fee in Nanticoke**

**Council passes ordinance requiring tradespeople to pay for license, take exam before working in city.**

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Contractors wishing to do work in the city must now pass a test proving they are qualified to perform the work they are hired to complete.

Council members unanimously approved a tradesperson licensing ordinance during Wednesday’s council meeting, with Councilman Brent Makarczyk absent.

This ordinance applies to workers in the construction or building improvement profession who work on residences or commercial properties.

General building contractors, HVAC contractors, electricians and plumbers would be required to apply for a license with the city building official, show proof of liability insurance and then take the exam under this new ordinance.

The contractors will be responsible for their own exam costs.

All contractors, regardless of trade, must pay a first-time fee of \$200 for a one-year license. It is renewable every year thereafter for \$150 annually. Contractors who fail the exam can retake it after 30 days.

Any person caught performing work without a license or before passing the test can be fined up to \$300 per offense and spend up to 30 days in jail.

City leaders hope this will cut down on shoddy work being performed by contractors within the city limits.

“You won’t get any fly-by-nighters coming in. They come in now. This way you see if they are knowledgeable in their trade,” Mayor John Bushko said.

Currently, contractors just show proof of insurance and pay for a license.

Nanticoke is just following the lead of other larger municipalities, such as Wilkes-Barre and Kingston, that require contractors to pass a test before working in those communities, he said.

Bushko said the city is debating whether to outsource the testing to another nearby municipality.

6/4/2009

**Church closings create parking problems in Nanticoke**

The city's Catholic churches are already experiencing a collateral problem from the diocese-mandated closings: a lack of parking.

The Diocese of Scranton has dictated that Holy Trinity, St. Stanislaus, St. Mary Czestochowa, St. Francis, St. Joseph (Slovak) and Holy Child in Sheatown must all be consolidated by July 2010 at the Holy Trinity site. St. Francis had its final Mass on Sunday.

Parishioners Millard Galat and James Samselski asked council on Wednesday to be able to close West Ridge and West Noble streets from Hanover Street to the alley behind Holy Trinity from 3:30-5 p.m. Saturdays and 9:30-11 a.m. Sundays until a better solution comes up.

The church needs more parking: the existing lot only accommodates about 78 cars, and as the other four churches close, Holy Trinity's membership could swell to 2,200 families, Samselski said.

He said the temporary street closings had been discussed with police Chief James Cheshinski and fire Chief Mike Bohan. Parishioners would take safety measures and clear the streets of snow in winter, Galat said in response to Councilman Jim Litchkofski's concerns.

But city officials were hesitant, saying they needed more information before allowing the streets to be closed. Mayor John Bushko said if it was allowed for Holy Trinity, the city's other churches would have to be allowed to close streets off for parking if they requested it.

Attorney Jarrett Ferrentino, who was filling in for Solicitor William Finnegan, said the diocese might have to add the city to its insurance. Litchkofski said the issues such as snow removal and insurance have to be settled before city officials can move forward.

Councilman Jon Metta asked to see a map of the proposed street closures, which Galat and Samselski agreed to provide. No KOZ vote

In other business, council discussed but didn't vote on extending Keystone Opportunity Zone status for two parcels of land belonging to Ken Pollock's Susquehanna Coal Co. One of the parcels is in the Whitney Pointe Industrial Park; the other is a piece of land on Lower Broadway that Pollock plans to donate as part of the South Valley recreation park, according to Pollock's representative, Tom Doughton.

The KOZ program, which allows businesses to forego state and local taxes until 2011, can be extended for seven to 10 years if the properties were not used and so did not reap the tax-free benefits.

Doughton said the Whitney Pointe parcel was never developed. The Lower Broadway site is in a flood plain and cannot be developed, but since Pollock plans to give it away, he would like the tax benefits, Doughton said.

Council also passed an ordinance requiring contractors to take a test proving their qualifications before they can operate in Nanticoke. It's a requirement under state law, city administrator Holly Quinn said. The city will be reciprocal: if a contractor already passed the test in Pittston, for example, he or she won't have to take it again in Nanticoke.

6/2/2009

### **GNA fills district principal job**

### **Michael Pawlik hired for newly created position in areas of curriculum and instruction.**

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The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board voted unanimously to hire Michael Pawlik as a district principal of curriculum and instruction during a specially called board meeting Monday night.

Pawlik will be paid \$85,000 a year for the newly created administrative position. Pawlik could begin work by July 1, Superintendent Tony Perrone said.

As district principal of curriculum and instruction, Pawlik will work with the district's principals to provide administrative direction for districtwide professional development programs, coordinate academic testing, develop curriculum guidelines and continue to improve the district's Pennsylvania System of School Assessment test scores. He will report directly to Perrone.

"He's a tremendous person,. very intelligent and certified all the way up (to superintendent level)," Perrone said.

Pawlik, the only applicant for the 12-month position, worked for the district previously for five years overseeing federal programs and the grant writing position.

Perrone said Pawlik worked at another district for one year and then decided to come back to Nanticoke.

Board member Cindy Donlin said she was pleased with Pawlik's hiring.

"He knows what he is doing. He is very knowledgeable in school and curriculum," she said.

6/1/2009

### **St. Francis holds final Mass before closure**

Bob Kalinowski, staff writer, contributed to this story.

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More than 500 parishioners gathered under the white tent set up next to their beloved St. Francis Church on Sunday for one final service in honor of the parish's 137-year history of serving the community.

"Change is a constant thing," said James Carey, who lives two blocks from St. Francis and has attended since he was 2 years old. "No one likes to see these things happen, but I know if you keep St. Francis in your heart, like a lot of people will, St. Francis will be here forever."

The final Mass was held outdoors because the church roof is damaged and potentially dangerous, but it also meant the parishioners could take advantage of the sunshine and cool breeze. Following the Mass, parishioners were invited to eat a meal that was catered.

St. Francis was one of the parishes targeted to close and consolidate as part of the Called to Holiness and Mission project to consolidate the Diocese of Scranton.

Louise Hudak joined St. Francis about 38 years ago when she moved to Nanticoke, and said while she loves St. Francis, she doesn't think they have a choice.

"With the population getting older, there's not too many people going anymore," she said. "I'm so sad that this church is closing, but I don't think we have a choice."

The Rev. Charles Connor, diocesan historian and rector of the Cathedral of St. Peter in Scranton, gave the homily, which focused on the history of St. Francis. Connor called the parishioners "real living monuments" of St. Francis, and said the workings of the Holy Spirit could be seen in them.

"May the spirit, legacy and Catholic faith of St. Francis permeate in this community for generations to come," he said. St. Francis will consolidate with the other four Nanticoke Catholic parishes and Holy Child Parish in Sheatown at the site of Holy Trinity Church. While St. Francis was directed to close by July 2009, the parishes have until July 2010 to fully consolidate.

5/31/2009

### **Mining exhibit brings back memories**

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Touring the coal mining exhibit at the Nanticoke Historical Society brought back heartfelt memories for Marilyn Owazany.

As Owazany, a Plymouth native, looked at the miners' equipment displayed on the table she recalled how her father took great pride in being a miner.

Her father, who set the charges to loosen the coal, wasn't forced to work in the mines – he liked his job, she said.

She never understood why some people seem to be ashamed of the coal miners in their families.

"I think it is a heritage to be proud of. I was proud that my dad was a miner. My parents worked hard to send us to college," the 66-year old said.

Her father worked in the mines until the 1959 Knox Disaster destroyed the region's deep-mining industry.

Her husband, Dan Owazany, recalled how his father would come home from work in the Wanamie coal mines and be "black as coal" after working deep in the mines all day.

Barry Littleford has never worked in the mines, yet he is fascinated by coal miners' lives. He's collected safety lights, helmets, lunch pails and other equipment coal miners used on a daily basis.

Miners worked hard for their minimal wages in extremely dangerous conditions for low pay. Miners earned about \$5 a day in 1923 and laborers were paid nearly half that for a full day's work.

They were a proud, hardworking and honest people who would always help their neighbors, Littleford pointed out.

"Back then people just worked hard and appreciated everything they had and they wouldn't think about taking it off their neighbor because if he had a little bit more than you, he'd share it," said Littleford, a member of the Nanticoke Historical Society.

As people toured the collection of artifacts, Littleford explained how coal miners used some of the equipment. Miners used safety lights to detect the level of oxygen and determine if methane gas was present in the mines. Methane gas was signaled if the flame grew larger as the light was held up high. If the flame went dim, there was a lack of oxygen



underground.

5/25/2009

## **Former Nanticoke State Hospital to celebrate 100th anniversary**

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She wanted to be a schoolteacher, but it was the Great Depression and Anne Rushin's family couldn't afford to send her to college.

The 98-year-old now lives in Kingston, but was born in the Alden section of Newport Township. Her initial dream was to study at Bloomsburg University — Bloomsburg State Teachers College, then.

But Rushin was one of 10 siblings, her father had died, and her five brothers had to go to college. Fortunately they got scholarships, she said. So in September 1930 Rushin started nurse's training at Nanticoke State Hospital, which provided her with room, board, and \$10 a month for expenses.

"I had no choice. I had to have a job," she explained. "I kept at it."

Rushin is believed to be the last living graduate of the Nanticoke State Hospital nursing program. The hospital, which started out as a private institution in 1909, was taken over by the state in 1911, and has been a part of the Mercy Health System since 1990, celebrates its 100th anniversary in October.

A 1905 typhoid outbreak caused by Nanticoke's water supply made members of the community realize the city needed a hospital. Doctors and officials of the Susquehanna Coal Co. formed the Nanticoke Hospital Association with that goal in mind, according to research by members of the Nanticoke Historical Society.

The coal company donated a plot of land, funds were raised, and the hospital was dedicated on Oct. 12, 1909.

"The special purpose of the Nanticoke Hospital is to care for the persons injured in and about the mines of Nanticoke and the surrounding territory," a state government legal report from 1918 states. "It became a state institution by virtue of the act of June 14, 1911."

The school of nursing at the State Hospital of Nanticoke was established by Director of Nursing Margaret Leech in 1914, historical society records indicate.

To earn a diploma, you needed one year of high school, according to a 1919 directory of women's vocational training opportunities. The course lasted two and a half years.

"It was very strict, I will say," Rushin recalled.

Nurses lived on the hospital grounds. Evelyn Reese remembers each two rooms shared a half bath, and there was a recreation room with a ping pong table.

Reese, 94, received her training at Wyoming Valley Homeopathic Hospital after graduating from Coughlin High School in 1933, then worked as a registered nurse at Nanticoke Hospital in the 1940s. She wanted to join the Women's Army Corps, but couldn't because of a punctured eardrum.

Her son, Dr. Donald Reese, also went into the medical profession — and is familiar with the same hospital, although it has changed since his mother's day. He's a podiatrist, who does consultant work at Mercy Special Care Hospital.

Trainee nurses reported for inspection at 6:30 a.m. and worked until 6:30 p.m., Rushin said. They had three hours off in a 12-hour shift, she said. Nurses' uniforms had to be white, their shoes clean — and their cuffs starched, Donald Reese said.

"In those days it was harder just to get ready for work," he said.

After they received their certification, nurses earned \$40 a month plus room and board, Rushin said. They would be scheduled for different shifts and assigned to various departments, she said. There were four collieries in the Nanticoke area, so the hospital's busiest department was the one that handled mining accidents, Rushin said.

"We treated every kind of patients. Mostly it was the miners. They didn't have emergency rooms like we did now," Evelyn Reese said. "They would come in, dirty from the mines, and we would take care of them."

Other duties included making the beds — the sheets had to have carefully folded "hospital corners" — working outpatient, putting on casts, helping in the emergency room, Rushin said. There were 100 beds in the hospital, and they were mostly filled, especially in the men's ward, she said. She believes a hospital stay cost \$10 a day in the 1930s, not counting extras like X-rays.

"It's not like it is now. You were there for a long time — and you didn't get out of bed, either," Evelyn Reese said.

"Now you have to do this and do that, and you're out the next day."

Rushin worked at Nanticoke State Hospital for 28 years before doing private duty nursing for a while, then took a job with the admissions department of the former Valley Crest nursing home. Her nurse's training was a blessing to the family when her mother became terminally ill.

“I never regretted being a nurse,” Rushin said.

Evelyn Reese left Nanticoke to work in other hospitals, but still remembers her time there fondly.

“She always spoke highly of it. She said she liked it there — she had a lot of friends there,” Dr. Donald Reese said. “She must have been a good nurse, because she had people keep in touch with her.”

By 1987, the aging Nanticoke State General Hospital was on life support. The acute-care facility was acutely in need of rehabilitation, but it was chronically short of finances and the state was looking to shut it down and/or get a private-sector suitor to take it over, according to The Citizens’ Voice archives.

Mercy Health System and Wilkes-Barre General Hospital were both interested, but after three years of limbo, in which South Valley residents rallied to save the hospital while the state planned its closing, Mercy stepped in to assume operations. On July 1, 1990, the transition from state to private ownership was completed.

Since then the hospital, now Mercy Special Care, has become an integral part of the community in its own right. Most recently, it became the new home of the Nanticoke area senior center, named after the late Rose Tucker, a former Luzerne County commissioner.

5/22/2009

### **Nanticoke will introduce licensing fees in July**

By IAN CAMPBELL Times Leader Correspondent

City officials approved a plan Wednesday to introduce licensing fees for tradespeople in response to a state law that takes effect in July.

The state regulation supersedes local regulations unless proper examination and certification is offered, and the step taken by the city introduces those examinations and certifications.

The move will impact contractors offering general building services, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, plumbing and electrical services. It also sets standards for legal liabilities, penalties for violations and an appeals process in case of a legal challenge.

Mayor John Bushko said the move should have been taken years ago to protect residents from shoddy work.

Solicitor William Finnegan said the language in the ordinance was legally acceptable, and the proposal did not conflict with the state law due to take effect mid-year.

Examinations, which will take place two or three times a year, will be conducted by a third party, City Clerk Mary Cheshinski said after the meeting.

In other business, council approved a request by the former parishioners of St. Francis Church for an outdoor Mass to be held May 31 on Green Street.

But council did not immediately accept a suggestion that parking problems at Holy Trinity Church be eased by blocking off part of a street during the Saturday and Sunday Masses and using the street for extra parking.

Recognizing that adding parishioners from both St Francis and St Joseph’s to the Holy Trinity lot would be difficult, the matter would still need to be addressed in more depth before a decision could be made, council said.

The closure of St Joseph’s is not scheduled until September, council noted, so the city has until then to sort out the parking issue.

The city also agreed to allow representatives of a consulting company to examine options for getting the current Blue Cross health insurance coverage at a lower cost.

5/15/2009

### **No tax increase in Nanticoke Area budget proposal**

Robert Olsen - Citizens Voice

Residents heard only good news at Wednesday’s Greater Nanticoke Area School Board meeting when Al Melone, business consultant to the district, announced a there would be no tax increase in the proposed 2009-10 budget.

Melone listed the district’s total revenue at \$25,060,597, including \$8,003,793 from local sources and \$14,622,547 from various state sources. Melone compared the revenue to the proposed expenditures totaling \$25,427,051, which technically leaves a deficit of \$366,454.

“But that is because I’ve worked a buffer of \$200,000 into the expenditures,” Melone said. “It’s a budgetary reserve ... money that we don’t even have to use. And those numbers don’t include any stimulus money.”

According to Melone, the district also may receive more than \$1 million in additional stimulus money.

“We’re in really, really good shape,” Melone added.

Some of the major expenditures for the district include: \$10,518,772 for salaries, \$5,135,315 for miscellaneous services and \$3,875,314 for benefits. The district also has a fund balance as of June 30 of \$3,784,830 with an additional \$1.7 million set aside for capital improvements.

“We’re alive and doing very well in Nanticoke,” Superintendent Anthony Perrone said.

Another bright spot for the district is the dramatic decrease in the number of student absences, especially among graduating seniors.

According to Stu Tripler, principal of the high school, approximately 189 students will graduate this year with an estimated 170 of them showing 25 or fewer absences.

Tripler credited a “more diligent” support staff for the reduction as well as the combined efforts of himself and assistant principal John Gorham.

“We see students in the hall that we knew were missing days and ask them what’s going on,” Tripler said. “Teachers would also supply us with the names of students who may have been missing some classes. There was a lot of one-on-one with some of the students. It’s made a difference.”

In other business, board member Pattie Bieski announced that, in the near future, due to a move, she would be leaving the board after 12 years of service.

“I applaud the current board members, as well as the previous board members from 1997 and on, from when I joined the board, for all of their commendable service,” she said. “We have made some hard decisions ... decisions we knew would hurt some people ... and we made them with dignity and integrity. We made those decisions so the state wouldn’t, and we’ve come a long way. If Nanticoke can do it with barely any tax base and limited government funds, then any district can do it.”

5/14/2009

**No tax hike in GNA’s preliminary budget**

**Board could have raised taxes by up to 10 percent, but felt funds were adequate.**

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The Greater Nanticoke Area School District has enough incoming funds to allow them to not raise the tax millage for next school year, according to business consultant Al Melone.

He presented his findings for the 2009-2010 preliminary budget during Wednesday’s monthly school board meeting. This will be the first budget operating under the new millage rates for new market value assessments. The school district market value is now \$696,911,400.

The district’s former millage rate of 255 mills now equates to 9.9295 mills. With the average property valued at \$79,015, the average taxpayer would pay \$785 in school taxes.

Board members could have raised taxes by 10 percent, but they felt the anticipated \$25,060,597 revenue expected for next year would be enough to operate and still have a healthy fund balance.

“We are in fantastic shape. This didn’t happen in one year, it occurred over several years,” Melone said.

Board member Sylvia Mizdail, a board member since 1982, helped steer the district through its toughest times in the 1990s when the district was facing bankruptcy. “I think we utilized the money in the proper way,” Mizdail said.

Taxpayers will see a reduction of \$145 on average in taxes they pay because the district receives casino revenue money from the state, Melone said.

Board President Bob Raineri commended Superintendent Tony Perrone, Melone and fellow board members for creating a budget that would not raise taxes.

The district is expected to carry over a fund balance of \$3.78 million into the 2009-2010 school year. Perrone pointed out this doesn’t include an additional \$1.7 million in the district’s reserve account for capital projects.

Kennedy Elementary will get new windows, new air conditioning units and an upgraded electrical system this summer as part of the district’s ongoing capital projects.

District officials are expected to approve the final budget during their meeting next month.

In another matter, board member Patty Bieski announced she will be leaving the board later this summer because she will be moving out of the district boundaries. On the board since 1997, Bieski said while it wasn’t always easy serving, it was worth it to improve the district where her three children were educated.

She also praised her fellow board members – past and present – for helping turn the district around financially.

“Nanticoke should really be proud of their school board. We have been able to go to where we don’t have any money to where we are now. If Nanticoke can do it, any district can,” Bieski said.

5/13/2009

### **Woman of the Year' a woman of God**

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When Sister Miriam Stadulis discovered she was named "Woman of the Year" for 2009 by the Woman's Club of Wyoming Valley, she could only say, "Grace be to God."

This surprise and modesty characterize Stadulis, who has dedicated her life to serving others. Stadulis accepted her plaque in honor of the recognition Tuesday at the Woman's Club of the Wyoming Valley's luncheon at the Westmoreland Club in Wilkes-Barre.

The "Woman of the Year" honor goes every year to a woman in the Wyoming Valley who performs outstanding community service. Each of the women in the committee voted for Stadulis, said Doris Merrill, chairwoman of the "Woman of the Year" committee.

"It's difficult to believe when you get something like this," Stadulis said. "I'm humbled and grateful."

A Nanticoke native, Stadulis joined the Sisters of Mercy in 1954. For more than 20 years, Stadulis has headed the McGlynn Learning Center in Wilkes-Barre.

She helped to found the center in the Wilkes-Barre Boulevard townhouses. The McGlynn Learning Center reaches out to children who live in low-income housing and provides them with after-school and summer programs. Each day Stadulis faces many challenges to assist the children, but she finds the job rewarding.

"I love interacting with the children," Stadulis said. "Many have finished or gone on to college or vocational school. It's all worth it when you see a young person succeed."

Stadulis also spent the first part of her life as an educator. She taught high school and elementary school and served as principal and vice principal at various schools.

As a child, she attended Nanticoke area schools, but graduated from St. Vincent's High School in Plymouth. Her teachers served as role models and influenced her career choice.

"I just admired all the teachers I had," Stadulis said. "That inspired me to get into the teaching field."

During the luncheon, the Woman's Club of Wyoming Valley also awarded its annual scholarship of \$1,000 to Coughlin High School senior Geralyn Cross. Cross, 17, plans to study biology at the University of Scranton. Cross is the vice president and valedictorian of her class. She was very excited to receive the scholarship.

"I felt honored because I didn't think I'd win anything like this," Cross said.

5/7/2009

### **Tax collection is on track in Nanticoke**

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The financially distressed city is where it should be when it comes to tax collection, council learned Wednesday. City officials, particularly tax collector Al Wytoshek, had been concerned the city wasn't getting all the 0.33 percent tax from people who work in Nanticoke but don't live there.

But Jim Hunt, tax administrator for Berkheimer Associates, told them collection of this "commuter tax" is where it is supposed to be, based on projections.

The state declared Nanticoke financially distressed in May 2006. A new earned income tax rate of 2 percent for residents and 0.33 percent for non-residents took effect in May 2007. The additional 0.33 percent was intended to bring in approximately \$225,000 per year, according to the city's financial recovery coordinator, Pennsylvania Economy League.

People who work in Nanticoke but live in municipalities that levy a 1-percent earned income tax pay 1.33 percent, with 1 percent going to the home municipality and 0.33 percent to Nanticoke. They are not eligible for a refund of the 0.33 percent, Hunt said.

He said the tax collector or tax preparer is supposed to know people in Nanticoke don't get that refund. The reference to check whether people are paying the entire tax is the 1-2 form, and Berkheimer has the ability to look up state Department of Revenue records to ensure they match local tax returns, Hunt said.

He said earned income tax figures should be available to the city by July, so fiscal administrator Holly Quinn can analyze them.

In other business, council approved an extension of Keystone Opportunity Zone status on two parcels of land owned by Earth Conservancy, one on Kosciuszko Street and one on Prospect Street, both near Luzerne County Community College.

5/7/2009

### **Nanticoke commuter tax hits prediction**

**Berkheimer rep tells council 1.33 percent levy appears to be on target with projections.**

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A Berkheimer representative told city council Wednesday that so far this year the revenue from the city's 2008 commuter tax appears to be meeting expectations.

Jim Hunt, president of sales and client services for Berkheimer, didn't have exact figures of how much in taxes the city has received so far this year.

He attended the meeting to answer questions about some people who were filing their local taxes and expecting money back because they thought the city received only 1 percent in commuter taxes. The city adopted a commuter tax rate of 1.33 percent in 2007.

"The city is due that whole percent because the city is a distressed municipality. It is my understanding the city has received all the money it should from the commuters," Hunt told the council.

Even if a person files his or her local taxes using a 1 percent tax figure and anticipates receiving a refund if an employer deducted 1.33 percent, the taxpayer will not receive a refund. After the Berkheimer staff audits the tax paperwork, taxpayers will receive a letter from Berkheimer informing them they are not due a refund.

Council also voted unanimously to approve extending the terms of the Keystone Opportunity Zone designation to two parcels owned by the Earth Conservancy group. The state and local government entities don't receive taxes on KOZ property.

Interim City Administrator Holly Quinn advised the city to approve a 10-year KOZ term for these properties, in part because Earth Conservancy is a tax-free entity.

She said she believes this will also help spur economic development once the property is ready to be utilized.

"This is basically an economic development tool. We aren't collecting any tax money on it anyway," Holly said.

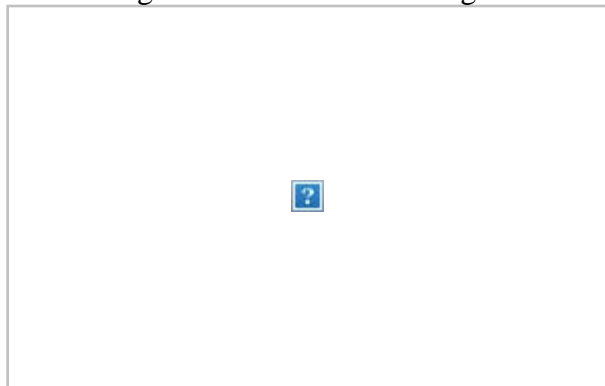
In another matter, Mary Beth Cheshinski was unanimously approved as the permanent city clerk. She has been serving as interim clerk for several months since former City Administrator Kenneth Johnson resigned.

5/1/2009

### **Nanticoke teen hits high note**

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Performing a solo can be an exciting and nervewracking event in any person's life. Even more so if you're a high school student.



Quentin Karpowicz performs his piano piece during the Greater Nanticoke Spring Concert Thursday night in Nanticoke.

s. john wilkin/the times leader

Select images available for purchase in the Times Leader Photo Store - [www.timesleader.com](http://www.timesleader.com)

Some people would be affected by stage fright just having to perform with a group – but not 19-year-old Quentin Karpowicz. He just took it in stride.

The Greater Nanticoke Area High School senior, who is autistic, performed his first piano solo Thursday night at the high school's auditorium in front of 200 people during the Spring Concert featuring the GNA High School Chorus, GNA Jazz Band and GNA High School Concert Band.

As a member of the chorus, he stepped down from his position on the risers to the front center of the stage to play "Swinging Along" on the black piano.

He didn't appear nervous, and he said earlier in the evening he was happy to show off his skills.

Karpowicz was doing what he loved and what came naturally to him – hitting the ivory and black keys.

His parents, Ed and Leonardia "Lenny" Karpowicz, couldn't be more proud as they sat in the third row with their older

daughter, Amanda Karpowicz, 15-month-old grandson, Conner Karpowicz, and two family friends. His parents pointed out that Quentin's autism makes it awkward for him to interact with other people socially. So for him to be able to sing and play the piano in front of a large audience is a major milestone. His mom said she is amazed at her son's musical talent, because no other family member has any musical abilities. It's important to encourage autistic children to do things on their own because that is how they learn, Lenny said. Doctors diagnosed Quentin with autism when he was about 2? years old. His parents were advised to have him institutionalized, his mother recalled.

"After we got through crying we decided we were going to do everything in our power to help him," Lenny said. So when he entered kindergarten they enrolled him in a musical class offered to autistic young children by Adria Schumusic.

He is still taking weekly piano lessons with Schumusic and devotes between 15 to 30 minutes daily practicing his piano skills using a keyboard at home.

She acknowledges having an autistic child does have its challenges. Autistic children can also make their parents extremely proud of their achievements – even the small ones.

"If you are willing to put the work into it and the patience, it can be done. You can't assume that they can never do anything. You always give it a try. You might be surprised," she said.

Karpowicz joined the high school chorus this year and previously sang in the district's Middle School Choir. He attends chorus classes twice a week and rehearses with his classmates on Monday nights, high school Chorus Teacher Ellen Rutkowski said.

"He loves to sing. He really responds well to the music," Rutkowski said.

When she first heard him play the piano she was very pleased with what she heard.

"He has a basic grasp of the notes, the rhythms and he has worked very hard with Ms. Schumusic. It's paid off," Rutkowski said.

Karpowicz's autism doesn't hinder his musical ability, she said. He just occasionally needs more specific directions than other students.

Another Nanticoke senior, Daryl Widder, works with Karpowicz's as his music partner helping him in music class.

**4/30/2009**

**Officials will fill in notorious strip-mining pit**

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On the five-year anniversary of her son's funeral, Nanticoke resident Jackie Bertrand looked at his pictures, volunteer firefighter helmet and pool cue with tearful eyes Wednesday.

Her 30-year-old son James Bertrand drowned April 26, 2004, in a notorious strip-mining pit filled with water in Newport Township. The 6-foot, 8-inch volunteer Nanticoke firefighter was a passenger in a Jeep that plunged off an embankment into the water. The Jeep was driven by Sally Jo Sanders, who escaped through an open window and walked barefoot for hours until she made it out of the remote area to contact police.

When Bertrand spoke to her son the day prior to his death, he told her he couldn't make it to dinner because he was a finalist in a pool tournament. They had dinner together the next day after he won. That was her last conversation with her son.

While at work the next day, she was in shock after her daughter, son-in-law and a friend told her that her son died.

"It was like a nightmare," Bertrand said. "We were so close."

Bertrand does not know why her son was at the strip-mining pit. She has never been to the site, saying, "I just can't bring myself to do it, not yet, anyway."

Earlier Wednesday, officials from the state Department of Environmental Protection, Earth Conservancy, state police and the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration drove trucks back to the strip-mining pit to launch a public awareness campaign called "Stay Out, Stay Alive" to warn people about the dangers of trespassing on abandoned mine sites.

State Environmental Protection Secretary John Hanger announced the site will be drained and filled. Bertrand says it's about time.

The abandoned mine site has claimed six lives in the past 11 years. Before James Bertrand's death, five people drowned there when their Jeep slid into the icy water on Jan. 1, 1998. Jennifer Dragon, 18, of Plymouth; Richard Ammons, 42, of Berwick; Stephen Nowak, 22, of Nanticoke; William Fishburn III, 25, of Lavelle; and William M. Vincent Jr., 31, of Hunlock Creek, died. Joseph Ruse of Nanticoke was the lone survivor.

“Six people died there. One was enough,” Bertrand said.

Knorr Contracting of Bloomsburg was awarded the contract to remove dangerous mine features and restore the site to pre-mining conditions. The \$717,080 cost will be funded with Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund federal money administered to the state, Hanger said.

More than 4,000 other abandoned mine sites in Pennsylvania also need similar work, but Hanger said there is not enough money to fix all of them. According to the state Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania has the largest abandoned mine land problem in the nation. Active mining operations are found in all but one of the state’s 67 counties.

“While we’re going about this critically important work returning sites like this to a safe condition, what we need is public education about staying away from these sites,” Hanger said. “One of the good things that could come out the horrible tragedies here is this location can serve as a warning. Perhaps this location can help grab people’s attention and then those lives would not have been lost without helping some others. We’re here to prevent future tragedies.”

Since 2000, 32 people have died trespassing in mines and quarries in 19 Pennsylvania counties, Hanger said.

“People shouldn’t be trespassing. They need to be respectful of the law,” he said. “The law is important for a whole set of reasons but in this instance, trespassing laws are ultimately designed to protect their lives.”

4/22/2009

### **LCCC looks at ways to fund construction**

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Luzerne County Community College’s Board of Trustees is evaluating proposals from three banks for a commercial loan to construct the new Culinary Arts Institute.

LCCC is looking to borrow \$3.15 million payable over 20 years to construct the institute in downtown Nanticoke at Market and Main streets.

Trustees heard proposals from First Keystone National Bank, First National Community Bank and PNC Bank during a meeting Tuesday night. The college advertised in late February a request for proposals seeking information on commercial loan rates and banking services rates.

The requests, known as RFPs, were sent to 22 banks, but only three banks responded with proposals for loans. A decision could come in June.

First Keystone offered two rate options – 4.2 percent for 10 years and then adjusting the financing rate for the remaining balance based on market conditions at that time for another 10 years, or a fixed rate of 4.59 percent for 20 years.

If trustees select a loan from First Keystone, the college will pay about \$21,454 a month, Keystone Senior Vice President Jim Gorman said.

FNCB offered three rate options. The first is a fixed rate of 3.99 percent for 20 years with a total payment of \$4,858,949, according to FNCB Senior Executive Vice-President Jerry Champi.

Another would allow the college to go with a variable interest rate for 20 years. The rate quoted currently would be 3.25 percent, but could drop to 2.74 percent or could rise to 4.74 percent, Champi said. The college would pay a total of \$4,288,394 if the rate dropped to 2.74 percent.

FNCB also offered a 3.49 fixed percentage rate for a five-year, interest-only loan. This would cost the college \$3,710,614 at the end of the term. First Keystone and FNCB offered the loans as tax exempt.

PNC Senior Vice-President Mike Dennen said his bank does not offer tax-exempt loans because it is not in its firm’s best interest.

He told board members a taxable loan can save the institution money because there are fewer fees involved – such as not needing to hire a bond attorney and get a bond authority.

4/18/2009

### **Nanticoke council fills vacancies, hires health inspector, custodian**

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Nanticoke City council recently named volunteers to fill board vacancies and hired a health inspector, engineering firm and custodian.

Steve Swicklik, Anthony Saracino and Mike Bohan were appointed to the planning commission, and Ed Janora was appointed to the zoning hearing board.

Henry Radulski will be the city’s new health inspector, a part-time position. He will be paid half the fee for inspecting

restaurants, bars, mini-markets and other such establishments, Mayor John Bushko said. Council hired Alberta Miller as custodian for city hall. City engineer Michael J. Pasonick Associates was rehired.

4/16/2009

### **Nanticoke can't hire part-time officers, per police contract**

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Residents who wanted to know why part-time police officers can't be hired to fight the city's increasing crime were told Wednesday it is forbidden by the police contract.

Residents also brought up the need for city police to pass on more information.

There have been four break-ins in the area of the Cherry Hill development, but police haven't been letting the public know, according to resident Maureen Mangino.

Residents Don Perkoski, Jerry Hudak and Linda Prushinski spoke about kids vandalizing the statue in Patriot Square. If the city can get a grant, officials will look into putting up cameras to monitor the downtown area because the police are spread too thin, Councilman Brent Makarczyk said.

Resident Hank Marks brought up some recent arson fires on Loomis Street and problems with a property he said was a drug house. He asked if city officials had thought to hire part-time officers.

"We're trapped by a binding contract," Makarczyk said.

Officers are working under the contract which ran from Jan. 1, 2004 to Dec. 31, 2008. Former council members admitted signing it without a public vote, according to The Citizens' Voice archives. Article 21, section 2 of the contract states: "The City agrees not to hire part-time police officers."

The subject came up in the ongoing contract negotiations, but the officers don't want to change it, Mayor John Bushko said. However, the distressed city's financial recovery plan calls for allowing part-time officers, which is being discussed, Councilman James Litchkofski said.

In related news, the city has received a \$25,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice as part of the economic stimulus funding being dispensed, city Administrator Holly Quinn said.

4/16/2009

### **Nanticoke OKs engineers, inspector**

#### **Also, city will apply for \$25,000 stimulus grant to buy police tactical gear.**

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City council members approved maintaining the city's current engineering firm during Wednesday's meeting.

Pasonick Engineering beat out two other firms to secure a five-year contract.

The city requested that companies submit a statement of interest. Pasonick, Borton Lawson and Quad 3 Group submitted the statements by Wednesday's deadline and were judged on five criteria: professional qualifications, the amount of specialized experience/technical competence, the capacity of employees to ensure work is completed in pre-determined time frames, the location of the firm and its knowledge of Nanticoke and specific experience or other qualifications that would make the firm stand out.

Now that the city has selected an engineering firm using the statement of interest format, it has a greater chance of securing federal funds to repair the city's infrastructure, interim City Administrator Holly Quinn said.

In other business, Henry Radulski was hired as the city's new health inspector. He replaces the former inspector who resigned earlier this year.

Radulski will be responsible for conducting annual health inspections at convenience stores, restaurants, gas stations and bars. Each inspection costs \$75 and Radulski will receive half of that, or \$37.50, for conducting the inspection, Quinn said.

"He's got experience. He worked in Wilkes-Barre," Mayor John Bushko said.

Radulski was one of two people interviewed for the job. He will work as needed.

Council members also approved authorizing city officials to apply for a \$25,000 U.S. Department of Justice grant to secure tactical gear for the police department. The grant is a portion of money available to police departments through the recently passed federal economic stimulus package.

A preliminary request form says the grant is needed to purchase eight sets of eye protection, elbow/knee pads, bulletproof helmets, gloves, eye protection, tactical belt and gas masks.

Bushko said it was a no-brainer to apply for the money, because if the city is awarded the grant, the department will



purchase what the city could not normally afford and the equipment will help keep the citizens safe. "If you are more prepared, you fight crime better," Bushko said.

4/16/2009

### **Orphanage gets new life as apartment complex**

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Their questions initially indicated apprehension, but when it came down to a vote, township residents overwhelmingly approved plans to renovate the former St. Stanislaus orphanage in Sheatown into a 30-unit apartment complex. Catholic Social Services plans to remodel the interior of the two historic buildings into 12 one-bedroom, 10 two-bedroom and eight three-bedroom apartments renting from \$450 to \$650 a month, housing development consultant Graysha Harris told the approximately 35 residents from Newport Township and Nanticoke who overfilled the commissioners' meeting room Wednesday.

The approximately \$7 million project, to be named after the orphanage, would be financed in part by the Diocese of Scranton, and in part by private investors, mainly banks, through a tax credit program.

"I think it's great, exciting," said township resident Joe Karpinski, who was raised at the St. Stanislaus orphanage from the time he was 2 until he was about 14. "It's overdue."

In addition to the two buildings, there is about 2.4 acres of land, where a playground will be added, and children can also play in 20 acres of diocese-owned land behind the property, architect Ralph Melone said.

"We want to be a part of the community," said Monsignor Joseph Kelly, secretary for human services in the Diocese of Scranton. "I find it hard to believe anyone would be against rehabbing these buildings."

Residents, worried about the possibility of drug activity and other crime, wanted to know what type of tenants would be brought in.

"I think people would not like to see another Sherman Hills," resident Eugene Skordinski said. "That's the main concern."

Families earning from \$15,000 to \$35,000 a year are the targeted tenants for the 800 square-foot to 1,500-square foot apartments, Harris said. Tenants will go through a screening process, she added. Six units will be specifically designated for veterans, said Steve Nocilla, CSS Executive Director of Housing.

The diocese is not seeking Section 8 certification, said Tom Cherry, director of the CSS Wyoming Valley office. And CSS will remain responsible for the St. Stanislaus Apartments, with a manager and maintenance staff to look after them, Harris said.

Holy Child Church, located between the two orphanage buildings, has been scheduled to close in 2010 by Bishop Joseph Martino.

Resident Joseph Rynkiewicz wanted to know if it would be used for more apartments. The church is too small, Cherry said. CSS is looking to keep it open as an ecumenical chapel, he said.

Commissioner John Zyla pointed out that the St. Stanislaus property could be used for something like a drug rehabilitation facility, or remain vacant indefinitely.

When the commissioners took a poll, 23 Newport Township residents favored the plans. Only three opposed.

Earlier Wednesday, some commissioners and residents toured the 19-unit St. Vincent's Apartments in Plymouth, which CSS created four years ago from a former school, to get an idea of what the non-profit was proposing for St. Stanislaus.

4/15/2009

### **Ex-Trojan runner Gesecki helps Navy win**

On CAMPUS BILL ARSENAULT

Navy defeated rival Army in women's track last Saturday and senior Abby Gesecki played a big part in the victory. Gesecki (Nanticoke Area) captured the 400 meter run in 57.55 and bested Army standout Ebony Thomas to get the victory as the Midshipmen won 116-87.

"Abby was focused against Army," coach Carla Criste said. "She has been looking tremendously strong the past few meets."

Gesecki recently finished seventh in the 400 at the Colonial Relays in Williamsburg, VA with a career-best 56.90. She also runs with the Navy 1,600 relay team.

"Abby will also be running in a few 800s, especially in the Penn Relays and the Patriot League Championships," Criste said. "She should easily make All-East (ECAC) in either the 400 or 800 and will be a strong contender for a title in

either event at the league championships.”

The Penn Relays are April 23 in Philadelphia, the Patriot title meet May 1-2 at West Point and the ECACs are May 15-16 in Princeton, N.J.

4/4/2009

### **South Valley chamber urges release of funding**

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Members of the South Valley Chamber of Commerce on Friday urged the Pennsylvania Stimulus Oversight Commission to allocate funding for the South Valley Parkway, even though the state Department of Transportation says the project is not “shovel ready.”

Chamber President Gerald Hudak said the availability of stimulus money for projects like the parkway, which would alleviate traffic problems on Middle Road in Nanticoke and Hanover Township, is an opportunity for PennDOT that may not appear again.

“After years of study and engineering, PennDOT should be capable of expediting the plan to the required status without much effort,” he said.

PennDOT representative Karen Dussinger said last week the \$54 million project does not meet federal economic stimulus guidelines because it is still in the early engineering phase. The proposed highway would run from state Route 29 to Kosciuszko Street.

Representatives from state Rep. Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Nanticoke, Luzerne County Community College and Earth Conservatory were present as Hudak warned of the dangers of using the Sans Souci Parkway as the only evacuation route from the area.

Trains that run along the Sans Souci Parkway could be carrying hazardous materials, and a derailment could have serious repercussions, Hudak said.

“It is our objective to save our community, save our industry, and save our children,” he said.

Joe Boylan, chief of staff for Yudichak, said the project has been a priority for many years, but the major deterrent now is PennDOT’s focus on repairing bridges throughout the state. Yudichak and his representatives have meet with PennDOT’s district engineer to “make sure we’re still on the right path and trying to get it done,” he said.

“It’s definitely needed,” he said. “We’re fighting every step of the way.”

Hanover Township Commissioner Bob Burns said the township’s police department has tried to increase police patrols on Middle Road, where excessive speeding has been a problem for years. He said the parkway would cut about half of the traffic on Middle Road.

4/4/2009

### **Nanticoke man’s troubles mount**

#### **Section of house collapses week after he lost his manufacturing job because of plant shutdown.**

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A man who lost his job last week at a Mountain Top manufacturing plant has now lost his Coal Street home, at least temporarily, after the rear addition collapsed Thursday afternoon.

Richard Kasisky, 61, couldn’t even turn onto his street when he returned from a three-hour unemployment benefits meeting for former HPG International employees because the one-way street was blocked with fire trucks responding to his home at 18 Coal St.

Yellow plastic caution tape is wrapped around the front porch, front doors and the backyard to prevent people and children from wandering around the property and possibly getting hurt in the debris.

Two yellow posters issued by Nanticoke Code Enforcement Officer Joe Kurdick condemned the house as dangerous and unsafe.

No one was hurt in the collapse.

Kasisky’s wife, Irene, said she was in the kitchen cooking when she heard “click-click-then boom” as the rear section, an add-on addition of their home, collapsed around 5:30 p.m.

Looking out the kitchen window she could no longer see the back portion’s roof, so she moved into the living room for safety.

“It shook a little bit, but the main house seems sound. We were in there and we were walking around,” Richard Kasisky said.

The family hopes to move back into their home, but they must hire their own engineer to inspect the home to see if it is structurally sound. The city's engineer inspected the home Thursday night, Kasisky said.

The Kasiskys don't know if their home insurance will cover the damage.

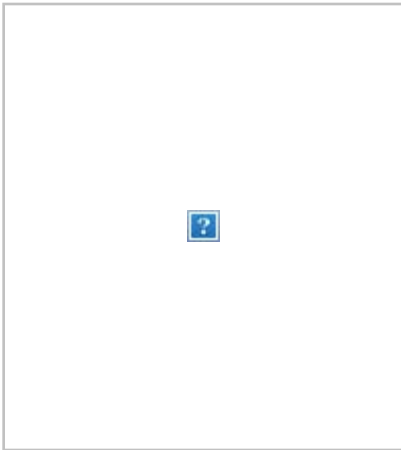
The Kasiskys stayed with their daughter Thursday night, but don't know where they will be living now.

The family used the rear portion, which was an add-on addition to the former double-block, for storage of tools and a deep freezer loaded with food that must now be thrown out, Richard Kasisky said.

Over the past several months he had been working to tear down sections of the storage room because the room began pulling away from the main structure, he said.

Snow and freezing cold temperatures over the winter months delayed him in being able to remove the entire section, he added.

The house, an original coal company house was built around 1895 and was valued at \$72,000 during the county's recent property reassessment. After an informal review with the reassessment company, 21st Century Appraisals Inc., the home's value was increased \$10,000 to a total of \$82,000.



4/3/2009

### **Nanticoke gets set for Music Fest**

The Nanticoke City Music Fest Committee will host the 2009 Music Fest June 5-6 at Patriots' Park in Nanticoke. 'The Starfires' featuring Eddie Day and Brad Crum as 'Elvis,' 'Farmer's Daughter' and 'The Cadillac's Band' will entertain. The Greater Nanticoke 'Ed Center Idol 2009' top 12 finalists will also perform from 4-6 p.m. Saturday. All vendors, crafters and people interested in sponsoring games can call Betsey at 735-2800 or e-mail [nanticokewebdesign@yahoo.com](mailto:nanticokewebdesign@yahoo.com) to participate.

From left, seated: Yvonne Bozinski and Theresa Sowa. Standing: Nanticoke Mayor John Busko, Doc Holliday, J.D. Verazin and Joe Walters.

For more information click [here](#).

4/3/2009

### **Nanticoke Education Center crowns its very own 'Idol'**

Pam Urbanski writes "Nanticoke Area Notes" every other Thursday. Story ideas and news items can be e-mailed to her at [pamurb806@aol.com](mailto:pamurb806@aol.com).

Students, faculty and staff of the Greater Nanticoke Education Center recently presented "GNA Idol."

The center houses sixth and seventh grade students and the event was organized by Frank Nutaitis, seventh grade English teacher, and J.D. Verazin, custodian and web designer. Twenty-three students took part in the competition. "We have some really talented students. It was hard to pick 12 finalists from the original 23 students," said Nutaitis.

There was not a famous celebrity announcing and judging contestants, but some rather friendly faces as 12 finalists took the stage, vying for the title of "Ed Center Idol."

Verazin, Nutaitis and Nina Matzoni, school transportation assistant and attendance officer, tried to calm nerves and add a little humor to the program as they portrayed Simon Cowell, Randy Jackson and Paula Abdul, the original "American Idol" judges.

"We had a great time trying to act out parts of the television judges," said Verazin.

Nutaitis and Verazin didn't stop at organizing and judging. Each were guest performers in front of a standing-room-only crowd. Verazin performed an energetic rendition of John Cougar Mellencamp's "Hurts so Good," while Nutaitis sang "Over the Rainbow," accompanying himself on electric guitar.

"I think we had more fun than the students. This event wasn't only about who could sing the best, but it was an opportunity for everyone at the center, adults and students, to come together to build relationships that, in turn, can only make the school and education process top notch," Nutaitis said.

So who was named the GNA Ed Center Idol? It was Morgan Elmy, a sixth-grade student captured first place. Mary Mash placed second and Jacyln Victor finished third.

And the stage lights have not been dimmed yet for the school year. The Ed Center Drama Club will take to the stage to perform "Quicksand," an original play written by Nutaitis. The play is filled with quirky characters, humorous situations and endless satire aimed at today's society. It will be held April 17-18 at 7 p.m. at the Ed Center.

**Living Way of the Cross**

High school students from the parish community of Holy Child, Holy Trinity, St. Mary of Czestochowa and St. Stanislaus have been busy preparing for their third annual Living Way of the Cross.

The event is a dramatic reenactment of Jesus Christ's last hours on earth. The evening also will be filled with moving music as choirs from all four churches perform. The Living Way of the Cross will be held on Palm Sunday at 7 p.m. at Holy Trinity Church.

### **Bishop to lead liturgy**

The Church of St. John the Evangelist, 231 E. State St., Nanticoke, will welcome its former pastor and now Bishop Samuel R. Zeiser, bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, on Palm Sunday. Bishop Zeiser will lead the liturgy and celebrate Holy Communion at 8 and 9:30 a.m.

### **Keep your property clean**

Joe Kordek, Nanticoke City code enforcement officer, announced the city property maintenance code will be strictly enforced with routine property inspections. Property owners are reminded to maintain their properties in a clean, safe and sanitary condition, including cutting the grass, keeping property free of appliances, unregistered vehicles, debris, rubbish and other inappropriate materials littering yards.

Owners will be cited for failure to comply with the ordinance.

Any questions relating to enforcement actions or to report unkempt properties, call the code enforcement officer at 735-2800, ext 104.

For those thinking of spring cleaning, employees of the refuse department remind residents that a sticker is required for bulk item pickup.

Stickers may be purchased at city hall.

Bulk items are not to be placed curbside before a sticker is purchased.

4/2/2009

### **Nanticoke Council OKs grant funds**

Eileen Godin - Times Leader

Council on Wednesday night approved two resolutions allowing for the use of more than \$1.9 million in grant funds for two projects.

Grant money totaling \$1.5 million from the state's Department of Community and Economic Development has been allocated for the Luzerne County Community College Culinary Arts Institute project.

Mark Construction Services Inc., of Scranton, will be building the new 22,000-square-foot building on the corner of Main and Market streets. Construction will begin as soon as possible, said Interim City Administrator Holly Quinn. The new LCCC facility will bring approximately 200 new jobs to the area and be a strong draw for new businesses, officials said.

Preparing for the future, council plans an overhaul of roads in the areas of West Church, West Noble and West Ridge streets at a price tag of \$441,958.

The city will receive \$348,008 from a Community Development Block Grant and \$93,950 in additional funds from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the federal stimulus bill, for the projects.

A start date for the road construction was unavailable.

In other business, council members are looking into the cost effectiveness of having an in-house cleaning employee instead of the current commercial cleaning services used for the municipal building and police station.

The part-time employee would be paid \$8.50 per hour. The city would provide vacuums, supplies and floor polisher totaling about \$1,000. Total startup cost would be \$8,000 the first year and result in a savings of \$3,000 this year and \$4,000 next year.

Mayor John Bushko agreed it would be a good idea and council should look into it further.

Council approved the following reappointments to the Zoning Hearing Board for four-year terms: Charles Alles, term ending Dec. 31, 2011; Jeff Grzynski, term ending Dec. 31, 2010; Michael Jezewski, term ending Dec. 31, 2011; and Thomas Wall, term ending Dec. 31, 2012.

One seat remains empty with a term ending on Dec. 31, 2013. Officials said that if any qualified person is interested, he or she should contact the municipal building.

The next council meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. April 15 in the municipal meeting room.

4/2/2009

### **Skateboard group pitches fundraiser for proposed park**

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Plans for the Lower Broadway Park include a much-anticipated 9,000-square-foot skateboard park, but the committee working on it needs funds to build it.

The nonprofit Northeastern Pennsylvania Free Skate Park Alliance is already selling a CD of 22 songs by local artists at stores such as Gallery of Sound. To raise more money for and awareness of the skate park, the alliance's founders, Kevin Pizzano and James Gidosh — who are members of the Lower Broadway Park committee — asked council for their backing and support to hold a Sk8tacular at the site.

The event would include performances by local bands and skateboarding, Pizzano said, noting that a similar one in Ashley raised \$1,800 for the NEPA Free Skate Park Alliance. Gidosh assured council they had insurance for the event, which he said would be held in late July or early August.

Mayor John Bushko said he didn't have a problem with the proposed Sk8tacular, but told Pizzano and Gidosh to come back for official permission when they had a definite date.

In other business, council:

Applied for \$348,008 in federal Community Development Block Grant funds and possibly an additional \$93,950 in federal economic stimulus money to repave West Church Street from Hanover Street to Market Street; West Noble Street from Hanover Street to Line Street; and West Ridge Street from Hanover Street to Line Street.

Passed a resolution that will allow officials to start drawing on \$1.5 million in state gaming money that will go toward the construction of Luzerne County Community College's Culinary Arts Institute by Scranton-based Mark Development. Work on the approximately \$7.5 million, 20,000-square-foot building, which will be built at Market and Main streets, is expected to start soon, but there isn't a particular date set for the groundbreaking, city Administrator Holly Quinn said.

Set aside a motion to re-appoint Steve Buchinski to the city's planning commission due to questions about his residency.

4/2/2009

### **School districts make plans to spend federal stimulus funds**

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Luzerne County school districts looking forward to receiving a chunk of the federal stimulus money aren't going to have to wait much longer, as \$44 billion is now available.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced Wednesday the release of applications and spending guidelines for \$32.5 billion in State Fiscal Stabilization Funds for saving jobs and reforming education, \$6 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and \$5 billion for Title I, Part A, which focuses on low-income schools.

States like Pennsylvania can start applying now and will receive the money two weeks after their applications are approved.

Local superintendents and school officials are thinking about the best ways to use the money once it comes in. They have been directed to spend it quickly and wisely. Duncan emphasized the importance of remembering this is probably one-time money that shouldn't be counted on to pay for reoccurring expenses.

Some Pennsylvania legislators are cautioning districts not to count too heavily on specific amounts of federal and state money just yet. A letter from Sen. Robert J. Mellow, D-Peckville, sent out in mid-March, urges school officials to be "cautious and flexible" when it comes to preparing budgets.

The letter points out the state has a projected budget shortfall of \$2.3 billion, and goes on to say General Assembly and governor are working on "an exceptionally austere budget."

With that message in mind, Dallas Superintendent Frank Galicki is being cautious about discussing for what the district will use stimulus money until final amounts are set.

"It's all about passing the plate around the table and seeing what comes to us," he said.

Pittston Area Superintendent Ross Scarantino is also being cautious about talking about specific projects, but said the district has a handful of ideas. Focus will probably be on students in need, extended education, teacher development and technology.

"I have the principals working with their teachers on plans, identifying students who are in the most need and doing some tentative plans in terms of expanding those programs," he said.

If the district receives money for building renovations and upgrades, it could go toward the Kindergarten Center, but Scarantino emphasized the district has no solid figures how much money it would receive for which types of projects.

**Greater Nanticoke Area would put renovation money toward the already-planned upgrades at Kennedy**

**Elementary School, Superintendent Tony Perrone said. The cafeteria should be eligible for money, which will be used to replace necessary equipment like hot water heaters and a dishwasher, he said.**

**In addition, Perrone wants to see part of the stimulus money going toward the salary of a new gifted teacher and for retaining tutors who were hired on a temporary basis. Despite cautions about using stimulus money for a reoccurring expenses, Perrone said he feels comfortable using a portion of it to hire a teacher.**

**“We were going to do that anyway,” he said. “When the two years area over, it’s something that we will continue with anyway.”**

3/29/2009

### **Business booms at the ReStore**

#### **Nanticoke facility offers home construction items to benefit Habitat for Humanity.**

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You’ll find nails by the coffee can – heck, by the cardboard box bursting at the seams – paint by gallons stacked to the tipping point, and enough decorative molding to trim a Manhattan high-rise.

There’s a piano sitting among the numerous doors for sale, an electric organ next to the bathtub, a washer, a dryer, a score or more of toilets and at least as many sinks. Against one wall you can find sander belts spilling off shelves like hundreds of escaping snakes and two slim artificial Christmas trees poking up behind a ladder.

The trees and ladder partially block the view through a window, and Paul Precht likes showing off what’s on the other side. Its 2,200 more square feet of space connected to the building where all that stuff is stowed. Soon the extra space will be rented for an expansion of the ReStore, a sort of low-budget home improvement center selling new items donated by big businesses that had a bit too much of the wrong stock and “gently used” goods from local do-it-yourselfers.

The store opened in 2003 as a way to recycle home construction items while raising money for Wyoming Valley Habitat for Humanity, a faith-based effort to provide affordable housing through donations and lots of sweat equity. After four years working part-time, Precht was named manager, and by coincidence or skill – or maybe a bit of both – business at the store has been soaring since, according to Habitat Executive Director Karen Evans Kaufer.

“In the last two weeks we’ve had individual days that have been the biggest sales days ever,” Kaufer said last week.

Compared to the same stretch a year ago, sales in the last six months are up about 20 percent, she added.

That contrasts with industry trends. After years of growth, the home improvement retail industry has hit a rough spot.

The Associated Press recently reported, for example, that Lowe’s expects this year’s first quarter sales to range between a decline of 3 percent and an increase of 1 percent. Construction in general has taken a big hit in the economic slide, although the U.S Department of Commerce reported an increase in new home sales in February, hailed by some in news articles as the possible beginning of the end of the downturn.

If sales at the ReStore have been swimming against the business current, Kaufer feels it’s partly because the place offers a cheaper alternative in a tightening economy, and partly because of Precht. “He made some good connections and brought some good ideas,” she said.

The man is modestly straightforward about the success. He credits a lot of the up tick to some big donations – which it should be stressed, are tax deductible. Some are recurring, like molding trim for walls, which has been donated by the pallet from Alexandria Molding. The stuff usually has some technical imperfection only noticeable to industry insiders. If you’re buying a batch of one type from the ReStore, Precht promised, it will look and work just fine.

Stock comes in fits and starts, like the parking lot full of brick and decorative stone that prompted him to push Habitat to buy a used forklift. “We were renting one for \$360 a day” as needed, he said. The alternative was for Precht and volunteers to hoist the heavy stuff onto customers’ trucks by hand.

Then there were the 10 flatbed loads of sheetrock donated by an area business. With no room inside to store it, he could only accept the delivery if he knew he would sell it all in a day or two. “It took a month to line everything up,” Precht said. He found people eager to buy the discounted wall material in quantities of at least 200 sheets, and managed to move it all onto and off the lot across the street during two chilly November days that, by good fortune, were dry. “Rain would have wrecked everything.”

Precht once picked up hundreds – probably thousands – of belts for power sanders when a widow donated stock from her late husband’s business. He got a forest full of artificial Christmas trees from Lowe’s that sold quickly. The store has received lighting and related equipment from companies like Friedman Electric, paints from K-Mart and other stores (the ReStore has a mixer and can tint them for you), and a lot of smaller household goods from Sears.

Precht’s life story sounds a lot like the store he now runs: An eclectic collection of experiences and events that

somehow manage to work well in one person. Originally from the Flatbush turf of Brooklyn, New York, he spent 17 years in New Hampshire, and his accent seems a quirky blend of both – call it, maybe, Brooklynshire, or New Hamplyn. He came to Nanticoke through a fluke of friendships that connected him, via New Jersey, to a woman who inherited a house here. That’s the house he now lives in, and he swears he loves the area.

“The people are friendlier here than in any place I’ve ever lived,” he said. And for those who grumble about bitter winters, he offers unsolicited perspective. “The weather is wonderful. After 17 years in New Hampshire, it always feels like summer to me.”

Precht ended up at the ReStore pretty much the same way he ended up in Nanticoke. After careers as race car driver/mechanic, band musician/sound technician, truck driver, machine shop worker/owner, freelance writer of automotive tech articles and a few other jobs, he settled here planning a quasi-retirement. “I was about 50 with no job and no Pennsylvania driver’s license. I couldn’t get a job anywhere but at Burger King,” he said, which was a bit too low-wage and unskilled to suit him. He drove by the ReStore, saw a sign seeking a truck driver, and applied.

His sales philosophy is simple: low prices and affable service. The first he accomplishes partly by looking up what donated items are worth and marking them somewhere between 20 and 50 percent of that, depending on condition and likely demand. He’ll also work out reasonable deals – buy one thing that’s selling well and another that’s been on the shelf a while, and he may knock the cost down. He’ll set something aside if you’re sure you want it but won’t have all the money for a day or three. And he’ll put you on a call list for specific merchandise if you know what you want and it’s not there the day you visit, but is likely to appear some time later.

Which is part of the second trick; friendly service. “I think there’s been a change in the people who come through the door,” he said, confident many customers are getting to know him. “Saturdays I can see 200, 300 people, and half of them walk through the door and say “Hi, Paul.”

Treatment of customers during a recent stay seemed to bear out the claim. One woman meandered through the store, bought some items and exited, only to return “I left my can of paint,” she said with a smile.

“You did?” Precht answered, “Good, we get to see you again.”

A woman from an area school district stopped by for some small supplies. As she headed out he offered a friendly, “Hope to see you again.” She laughed: “Oh, I’m sure you will.”

The phone rang. It was K-Mart, ready to contribute more than 100 cans of spray paint – if he could get to Hazleton to pick them up. Precht said he doesn’t usually travel that far, but something could probably be worked out.

That’s the nature of the place. There is no effort – nor could there be – to keep any items in stock. Quite the opposite. The goal is to find it and sell it. It pays to visit often, since the merchandise can change dramatically from week to week and even day to day (though from the looks of it, molding will be available for quite a while). Donors are welcome, and Precht stressed that they have a truck and will pick up. (Habitat reserves the right to reject items too worn or damaged for resale.)

One more thing, he wants to stress. For some reason, there are apparently people who remain convinced this isn’t a retail operation. Considering that word of mouth is usually the store’s only advertising, that’s an idea he urgently wants to dispel.

“Tell everybody we’re open to the public,” he said ... smiling, of course.

### **BUY OR DONATE**

The Wyoming Valley Habitat for Humanity ReStore is at 421 W. Main St., Nanticoke. Regular store hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Tues.-Sat. Call 258-0998 if you have questions or want to donate items that need to be picked up.

3/28/2009

### **Stanky family sees the world, creates lasting memories playing in polka band**

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While their classmates were listening to the radio and pondering the significance of the lyrics of Don McLean’s “American Pie,” the Stankovic sisters were playing “Apples, Peaches, Pumpkin Pie” at venues all across the country. Instead of watching John Travolta in a white polyester suit disco dance to Bee Gees tunes in the film “Saturday Night Fever,” the teenagers spent their Saturday nights looking across the stage as legions of devoted polka fans did the oberek, a lively hop and turn step.

There was no time for school dances or late-night snacks at the local Carrol’s (later Burger King) on weekends. Debbie and her younger sister, Kim, were tossing duffle bags and musical instruments into their parents’ van and traveling to polka gigs as part of Stanky and the Coal Miners. Kim played the clarinet and saxophone and Debbie played the trumpet. Their father, John “Stanky” Stankovic, sang and played accordion while Dottie, their mother, harmonized with

the band and organized bookings and schedules.

Almost 30 years later, Debbie Horoschock, 45, and Kim Bukowski, 41, still perform with their father and his band when their schedule permits and often bring along their children — Ashley Horoschock, 15; Alex Bukowski, 12, and Trevor Bukowski, 5 — as a third generation carries on the family polka tradition.

And the girls cherish their own childhood memories of traveling with their parents to perform in front of thousands of polka fans at concerts and USO tours all over the world.

Home was often on the road via the family's old beat-up black Dodge van traveling to the Bloomsburg Fair or the casinos in New Jersey. They also traveled by plane, train and cruise ship to Alaska, Hawaii, China, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, South Korea, Australia and Spain.

"Polka is a type of family music," said Stanky. "The audience knows that."

In addition to instilling a strong work ethic in their daughters, John and Dottie, of Nanticoke, encouraged them to participate in extracurricular activities throughout their school years. "We wanted them to have friends and do all the things that they should do as children and teenagers," said Dottie.

Debbie was a member of the band and played basketball. Kim was captain of the basketball team. Kim attended her high school prom, but Debbie good-naturedly grumbles that "my prom was always held during cruise week."

And more often than not to the dismay of the two sisters, school books and homework accompanied them on many of the band's bookings. "We all sat together in the hotel room and did the homework," said Dottie. "If we had to pull them out of school, we asked the teachers to give us the homework, so they wouldn't miss anything."

"They came to us and asked if they could learn to play an instrument," said Dottie. "They said they wanted to get involved in music and be a part of the family band."

Music began early for the girls, who took instrument lessons around age 7 and joined the band several years later before junior high school. Stanky remembers Kim asking for a horse. "I told her that if she learned to play the polka on the clarinet, I would buy her a horse," he said. "One day, she comes downstairs with her clarinet and plays for me. The next day, we were out buying her a horse."

And polkas can also be credited with a little romance. Debbie first met her husband, Vinny, when he began playing drums with the band at the age of 14. But, due to the six-year age difference between them, it wasn't love at first sight.

"I think I was about 8 years old, and he was just the kid who slept on our couch at night after jobs with the band and wouldn't go home," she laughed. The two started dating years later as Debbie toured more often with her family.

In the course of one week, Stanky and the Coal Miners performed in South Korea, Bloomsburg and Spain.

Today, Stanky entertains at area rest homes about twice a week as a tribute to his older fans who can't attend his shows anymore. "We never choose only the big jobs," said Stanky. "We can play at the Waldorf-Astoria one day or Trump Plaza and Joe's Bar the next day. I always told the girls, 'All jobs are big even if we only play for 10 people.' Whoever calls us first, that's where we go. And I don't cancel a small job to play a larger one."

Kim never remembers her father cancelling a job because he was sick. "He said you just play through having a sore throat or cold," she said. "You never complain."

And weather won't even get Stanky down. "I remember being in the WVIA studios for our polka TV show when the governor called a state of emergency because of a snowstorm," recalled Debbie. "And there were just four people in the audience, and I told him I quit because we shouldn't play. But he wouldn't listen to me. He would play in bad weather and even if only one person showed up."

Stanky is probably the only boss who will boast that he's gone through 750 musicians in his more than 60-year career. But that's not because he's difficult to work for; it's probably just the opposite. "I tell my band members to live their own lives," he said. "I always say that family comes first. If you can't make a show because of a family obligation, don't worry, I'll get someone else."

Now that his daughters have careers and families of their own, the times they are all able to get together on stage are that much more special. The family balances careers and only joins the band occasionally for the annual Christmas TV show or special occasions. Debbie works for the Department of Revenue and her husband, Vinny, is a Luzerne County Prison guard. Kim is a software consultant, who often takes her laptop computer with her on band gigs.

"I play whenever my dad asks me to," said Kim. "I'm honored to carry on his tradition."

Debbie agrees: "Polkas got me to see the world."

3/28/2009

**It's hard to believe**

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It's hard to believe the first time Loretta Chmura met her beloved pet macaw Cocomo 13 years ago was when she arrived at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport in Avoca to pick him up after his plane landed.

Cocomo, then only 3 months old, had traveled in a box with two other parrots from a farm in Florida.

The Nanticoke woman, who purchased the macaw by mail order, didn't even get to name her own pet. She kept the name he was given at birth.

Surprisingly, it wasn't exactly love at first sight. Chmura admits that although she had birds as pets before, she was a little overwhelmed in the beginning caring for the macaw. She credits her neighbors, Pat and Debby Rentko, with helping her feed him with a syringe to pump formula into his beak for the first two weeks.

Thirteen years later, Chmura doesn't know what she would do without Cocomo in her life. He accompanies her on visits to Wesley Village in Jenkins Township, where she works as an activity aide. "When I first got him, I thought he'd just sit on a pole in his cage," she said. "I never really thought that a bird could bring so much joy and love. You may think that about a dog, but never a bird."

Cocomo has a social calendar that is booked solid, entertaining residents and veterans groups at area rest homes several times a week. He is so well-known in Nanticoke that his trips outdoors with his owner (his wings are clipped so he won't fly away) literally cause traffic jams.

"I must have had more than a hundred trick-or-treaters at Halloween this past year," said Chmura. "But the kids didn't care that I was giving out candy and money. They just wanted to come in to see Cocomo."

The macaw loves the attention. He often lifts his foot to wave to his admirers. And he acknowledges his owner by name, calling out "Loretta" throughout the day and alerting her when the UPS deliveryman is at the door. And just like his owner, he enjoys polka music. The bird will move his body up and down to the beat.

Looking over his vast array of toys, ranging in cost from \$5 to \$75, Chmura admits the macaw is spoiled. Or, as she prefers to tell it: "He's just treated good like an animal should be treated."

Just like any person in the Wyoming Valley, Cocomo enjoys a slice of pizza on Fridays. He also feasts on mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs and spaghetti and meatballs.

Chmura and Cocomo have clearly bonded over the years. When Cocomo doesn't see his owner, he turns to Loretta's husband, Joseph, and asks "Where's Loretta?" when she is at work.

Since macaws can live to the age of 90 or 100, Chmura has included Cocomo in her will, ensuring that he will be taken care of after she dies.

3/28/2009

**Parkway project needs state funds**

**South Valley president is in favor of connecting Route 29 with Kosciuszko Street.**

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Gerald Hudak, president of the South Valley Chamber of Commerce, says the proposed South Valley Parkway project "isn't a bridge to nowhere or a pork barrel project" and should be given top priority for state funding.

"We desperately need the South Valley Parkway for both economic and safety reasons," Hudak said Wednesday. "This is the future of the South Valley Region. It would generate jobs and make the area more attractive for development."

Karen Dussinger, spokesperson for Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, said the project is "on hold" and doesn't meet the guideline to be funded with federal stimulus dollars.

"The current administration's focus is on rehabilitating and preserving roads and bridges," Dussinger said. "But that doesn't mean it's a dead project."

Dussinger said the project has gone back to the drawing board a couple of times and has several phases. She said Phase I would connect state Route 29 with Kosciuszko Street at an estimated cost of \$32 million. Phase II would connect Kosciuszko Street with Prospect Street and would cost approximately \$17 million. The road would give better access to Luzerne County Community College, Hudak said.

"The project wouldn't qualify for federal stimulus funding because the design is not far enough along," Dussinger said. "Right now we have rudimentary design, so we're looking at a couple of years before it would be ready for construction."

Dussinger said Phase I of the new road would run from the Middle Road exit off of Interstate-81 at Route 29, through Askam to Kosciuszko Street in Nanticoke. Phase II would pick up at Kosciuszko and go to Prospect Street.

Hudak said the project has been delayed "for many years, for many reasons." He said the project is important to the area and would create many new jobs.

"It is time for our legislators to forget their political differences and pull together to improve the quality of life in

Luzerne County,” Hudak said in a letter to Gov. Ed Rendell. “The people of the City of Nanticoke have supported you and your administration for many years. We are asking for your support in this effort.”

Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, said the parkway is his number one infrastructure project, saying it will address critical traffic safety issues and serve as a springboard for economic development.

“Obvious budget constraints have plagued the project recently, but I am working with PennDOT and the Rendell Administration to keep the project moving forward,” he said.

U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Nanticoke, said he has helped secure \$10.5 million in federal funds for the project.

“It is unfortunate that there have been so many delays in this project over the years so that it is not ‘shovel ready’ now that the federal government has released millions of dollars to Pennsylvania to stimulate the economy,” Kanjorski said.

3/21/2009

### **Seniors welcome new center**

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The South Valley’s new senior center at Mercy Special Care Hospital on Washington Street has been getting some rave reviews for its larger space and better programs.

“It’s beautiful,” said Newport Township Senior Citizens’ Club President Bernie Macijczak. “Much nicer than the old one, with circles around it.”

The Rose Tucker Center at Mercy officially opened Friday with a ceremony attended by local dignitaries, including Luzerne County Commissioner chairwoman Maryanne Petrilla, state Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, and Commissioner Greg Skrepenak. The 79-year-old Tucker was guest of honor.

“You have a center here that is absolutely beautiful,” she told the more than 200 seniors, hospital officials and friends who came to join the celebration.

Tucker, who served as Luzerne County’s first female commissioner, was born in Wilkes-Barre but spent most of her life in Nanticoke and considers it her home.

When she found out the new senior center would be named in her honor, she said, “I was embarrassed at first. I said no. After I was coaxed and coaxed, I said OK — but there are others who are much more deserving.”

The original city-owned senior center at Market and Main streets will be torn down to make way for Luzerne County Community College’s Culinary Arts Institute. Mercy Special Care Hospital officials responded to a request for a replacement.

Some seniors complained the new site was too far from downtown and were concerned about transportation.

There was a bit of resistance at first, senior center Director Maureen Haydt said. But now that seniors have had a chance to see what the new center offers, they are coming around.

“We love it here,” said Helen Gates. “It’s the place to come when you’re a widow. And everyone’s nice here.”

Macijczak said she is touting the new center to other members of the club.

Ann Rinehamer practically lives at the center. She takes the van there every weekday at 9:15 a.m. and stays all day.

“My kids call it my home away from home,” Rinehamer said, laughing.

Lillian MacWilliams said there are so many activities that people who don’t enjoy themselves have nobody but themselves to blame.

The more spacious center boasts a computer room, where computer classes will be offered; a puzzle room and an exercise room where seniors can take weekly T’ai Chi classes and participate in the “Healthy Steps” fitness program, Haydt said.

The partnership with Mercy Special Care Hospital makes the Rose Tucker Center the first senior center of its kind in Luzerne and Wyoming counties, according to Mary Beth Farrell, executive director of the Area Agency on Aging for Luzerne and Wyoming Counties.

Because of the connection with the hospital, the center is able to provide a variety of health and wellness services, she said. These include blood pressure testing, diabetes screening, laboratory services, dietary counseling and mental health services if necessary, Farrell said.

The center also has a focus on prevention, Mercy Administrator Robert Williams said. There are physicians available on staff, and a telemedicine system is being installed that will enable the monitoring of seniors’ health, possibly saving trips to the emergency room, Williams said.

3/21/2009

### **Center name a salute to seniors’ special pal**

## Renaming honors Rose Tucker for her work

slong@timesleader.com

Former Luzerne County Commissioner Rose Tucker's dedication to the elderly is forever cemented as the Nanticoke Senior Citizens Center was renamed Rose Tucker Center at Mercy in her honor Friday afternoon.

After three decades in the former post office building at the corner of Main and Market Streets, the South Valley's seniors now gather in the basement of the Mercy Special Care Hospital on West Washington Street.

Tucker, 79, a Nanticoke native, spent her career helping others. Before the Democrat served as Luzerne County Commissioner from 1992 through 1996 and for about six months in 2007, she worked as the Director of Migrant Workers and with the Maternal and Family Health Agency.

With an inviting grandmotherly smile, Tucker was humble as several elected officials praised her dedication to others. "I am overjoyed and delighted you did this. There are many people that deserve this more than I do," she said.

Well, state Reps. Phyllis Mundy and John Yudichak and Luzerne County Commissioners Maryanne Petrilla and Greg Skrepenak might differ.

Calling Tucker "a trailblazer," Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, said this is a beautiful legacy for Tucker to leave.

The hospital and the Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Bureau for the Aging created a partnership, which resulted in opening the new facility in January.

"We felt it would be good for the community, good for the seniors and good for the overall health care of the community," Hospital Chief Executive Officer Bob Williams said as to why the hospital offered its facilities to house the center.

Because the senior center is housed in the hospital, medical staff will be able to offer more wellness and prevention classes, as well as medical screenings, Williams said.

The hospital covered most of the renovation costs itself to move its rehabilitation services center to the first floor to make room for the new seniors center. Williams didn't have an exact figure for renovation expenses. A \$5,000 state grant helped cover some of the renovations and moving expenses, Yudichak said.

This is the first senior citizen center in Northeastern Pennsylvania to enter into a health-based partnership, Bureau Director Mary Beth Farrell said.

The hospital and bureau entered into a five-year agreement to house the facility. That agreement could be extended. Tom Smith of West Nanticoke, who attends the center nearly every weekday with his wife, Ardis, was so impressed with the new space he gladly provided tours of the 1,800-square-foot facility offering seniors daily lunches, access to computers, a game room where people can solve jigsaw puzzles and health care facilities.

3/19/2009

## Nanticoke passes three ordinances

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During a brief, 30-minute meeting Wednesday night, three city council members took action on three proposed ordinances.

Ordinances dealing with removal of snow and ice, outdoor solid-fuel furnaces and mandatory recycling were approved at the second reading.

The snow-and-ice ordinance requires residents and business owners to clear snow and ice from sidewalks within 12 hours after the end of a storm. People will not be permitted to place snow next to a fire hydrant or in the street.

Anyone caught violating these rules must appear before a judge and pay a fine of at least \$25.

Anyone wishing to install a solid-fuel furnace must have the unit inspected by the city's code enforcement officer, receive a permit and keep the unit at least 25 feet from the edge of their property, according to the ordinance.

The units may be operated only from Sept. 1 through May 31, unless the unit is the only source of residential interior heat and domestic hot water service.

The mandatory recycling ordinance was a revision of the original ordinance from 1989. The upgraded version allows recycling to also be done at community activities with more than 200 attendees.

The council reappointed four men to city community boards for a three-year period. Thomas Wall and Michael Jezewski will serve on the Zoning Board. John Grontkowski will serve on the Planning Board and Ron Kamowski will serve on the General Municipal Authority Board.

The terms are effective Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2012.

Council members Jon Metta and Jim Litchofski were not present.

3/19/2009

### **Nanticoke council applying for state grants**

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Nanticoke City Council is applying for two state grants that could bring in a total of \$3 million to help develop the Luzerne County Community College's Culinary Arts Institute and program.

The council gave approval during Wednesday's meeting to apply for the grants, and the applications are already written and ready to submit, according to Chris Cawley, managing director of Northeastern Economic Development Co.

The Growing Greener II grant would be for \$1 million and the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant would be for \$2 million. Cawley said the grant money could be used for general program and building development and is not limited to a specific purpose.

Thomas Wall and Michael Jezewski were reappointed to four-year terms on the City of Nanticoke Zoning Board, effective Jan. 1, 2009, and Jan 1, 2008, respectively. One position remains open.

John Grontkowski was reappointed to a four-year term on the city's planning board, effective Jan 1, 2009, and two positions remain open.

Councilman Joseph Dougherty said, in response to residents' complaints about dirty streets and property, that the city is working on renting a street sweeper. He did not have details on the cost, but said he would find out by the next council meeting.

3/16/2009

### **Momentum grows for Nanticoke skate park**

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There could be a ground-breaking for Nanticoke's long-awaited skate park at this time next year — if everything continues to go well.

Although they had to be scaled back because of the economy, plans are still in the works for the Lower Broadway Park.

"I think things have really been progressing in Nanticoke," skateboarder James Gidosh said.

Northeast Pennsylvania Skate Park Alliance founders Gidosh and Kevin Pizzano, members of the team planning the park, have been doing research and coming up with ideas on how to make Nanticoke's skate park a regional attraction.

"Those guys are so dedicated," Nanticoke City Administrator Holly Quinn said. "They traveled all around the country checking out skate parks. They're giving us insight into what's going to be best for our community."

Members of the Lower Broadway Park team met last week with a landscape architect from the Borton-Lawson engineering firm to come up with a revised version of the original 2005 plan.

The new plan, although scaled back, still contains what community members determined were the most important elements, according to Joe Boylan, chief of staff for state Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke.

The first phase of the project, slated for the Lower Broadway area from Market Street to the old railroad tracks, will include 25,000 linear feet of walking trails, a 1,000-square-foot pavilion with public rest rooms, and up to 20,000 square feet of picnic area, Boylan said. There will be an approximately 30,000-square-foot BMX bicycle racetrack as well, he said.

But the key feature will be the 9,000-square-foot skateboard park, which will have an additional 9,000-square-foot concrete pad next to it. Boylan said this pad, which can be used to expand the skate park later, can be used for teaching beginners to skateboard, for street hockey and possibly as an ice-skating rink in the winter.

Gidosh said he prefers a poured concrete park, which makes for better quality and rideability, instead of prefabricated concrete.

"It sure would be great to have it all at once, though, instead of phasing," Gidosh said, but added that he knows money is the issue.

The price tag for Phase I of the park is roughly, \$829,000, which Boylan said would include environmental work, landscaping, contingency costs, design and engineering services.

The new park plan is crucial for the process of applying for grants, which is getting under way, Boylan said. A lot of what happens with the park depends on what kind of funding comes in, he said.

Construction is planned for spring 2010 to coincide with the start of the streetscaping project for Market and Main streets, Quinn said.

City officials want to get that area in shape by the time Luzerne County Community College moves into the Kanjorski

Center on Main Street — the new health sciences center — and work is complete on the Culinary Arts Institute, to be built at Market and Main streets.

The City of Nanticoke has federal funding U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Nanticoke, obtained some time ago for improvements such as new sidewalks and streetlights, and Boylan hopes some of it can go toward the Lower Broadway park.

NEPA Skate Park Alliance has already been pounding the pavement seeking funds from the private sector, and plans to keep looking for donations. One fundraiser is a CD of 22 songs by local bands. The CD is available for \$5 at any Gallery of Sound store, and Gidosh said 100 percent of the proceeds go to the NEPA Skate Park Alliance.

“You can’t go wrong for \$5,” Gidosh said.

3/15/2009

### **For first time since WWII, 109th soldiers serve as artillerymen on the battlefield**

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Soldiers from the 109th Field Artillery are in Iraq and have launched their historic wartime mission — serving in the battlefield as field artillerymen for the first time since World War II.

The 90 Pennsylvania Army National Guard soldiers, based out of **Nanticoke’s Bravo Battery**, are firing artillery rounds in support of missions by the active duty U.S. Army, unit leaders said.

This marks the first time since World War II that members of the 109th are performing the job they train for year-round. During previous deployments to war over the past six decades, they have served as military police officers and in other capacities.

Most recently, the unit was stationed near Taji, Iraq, about 20 miles north of Baghdad. Soldiers are being led in the war zone by Capt. Joe Ruotolo, 37, of Harveys Lake.

“They experience long days, yet their professionalism never waivers. Every soldier in this battery brings something special to the team, and they do what they’ve got to do to get the job done, ahead of schedule, and well beyond set expectations, every time. Anyone would be proud to call himself a member of the ranks,” Ruotolo said in e-mail.

Unit leaders on the ground took photos of soldiers firing artillery shells from the 109th’s latest weaponry, the M777 Howitzer, while training in Kuwait days before entering Iraq in February. The unit forwarded the photos to The Citizens’ Voice.

The M777 Howitzer is a lightweight 155mm towed cannon with digitally guided technology. It is capable of firing artillery shells well over 20 miles and hitting its target with pinpoint accuracy.

Soldiers have also “managed and facilitated” the operation of the Iraqi National Railroad, the first time it has been active since before former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s reign of power, unit leaders said.

“The battery has undergone several mission changes in the short time we’ve been here, and currently, the battery holds several different, extremely diverse missions and excels in every single one. In the face of constant change, the men of the battery are constantly motivated and possess a great deal of pride in the unit they belong to. Their pride is evident every day,” Ruotolo wrote.

3/14/2009

### **Greater Nanticoke gets \$1M stimulus**

### **Money to be used for construction and to help students improve reading.**

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The Greater Nanticoke Area School District had reason to celebrate during Thursday’s board meeting. Superintendent Tony Perrone announced the district is receiving \$1 million from President Barack Obama’s educational stimulus plan.

About \$378,000 of that can be spent on construction projects. Another \$448,000 of it is designated as Title One money that must be used to help improve their reading skills. It was not discussed how the remaining funds would be used. Part of that construction money could pay for the third phase of the Energy Savings Program. Kennedy Elementary will be remodeled this summer to make the building energy efficient.

A new air-conditioning systems and new windows and shades will be installed for \$389,803.

The district has saved \$160,524 from upgrades of new windows, shades and a/c units to the district’s other campuses, District Director of Buildings and Grounds Frank Grevera said.

The program is an ongoing effort to upgrade all the buildings, while also conserving energy and reducing utility costs.

“We analyze the building and try to see where we can save money,” Grevera said. “We take the money it would have cost us over the next 15 years and put energy efficient equipment in.”

The board also was treated to a free concert by sixth-grader Morgan Elmy, who won the [Nanticoke Idol competition](#) in late February. Elmy sang “Stay” by country duo, Sugarland.

The board also recognized students who won awards in the [Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science competition](#), the Educational Center Science Olympiad Team and the Middle School/High School Computer Fair.

3/13/2009

### **Greater Nanticoke Area students receive recognition for scholastic achievements**

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Greater Nanticoke Area School District had a lot to boast about at Thursday’s monthly board meeting, as dozens of middle and high school students have recently placed high in regional science and math contests and several will be competing at the state-level.

At the Middle School/High School Computer Fair on Feb. 18, four middle school and seven high school students took home first-, second- and third-place awards.

Five students took home first-place awards at the [Academy of Science on March 7, and one, seventh-grader Baylee Steininger](#), won the Excellence in Biology award that is given to one student in seventh through ninth grades. They will take their projects to the state competition.

Science Olympiad middle school students set a school record by taking home 12 medals and finishing first at Tuesday’s competition. The 16 students will continue on to the state competition.

For a school that has frequently scored low on state standardized testing, Superintendent Tony Perrone said the results showed how smart the students are.

“Everybody thinks, ‘Well, that’s Nanticoke,’” he said. “And this is Nanticoke.”

Sixth-grader Morgan Elmy got a standing ovation from the board and audience members for her performance of “Stay,” by country music group Sugarland. She won first place in the [Educational Center Idol Contest](#) in February.

In regular business, phase three of the Energy Conservation Services proposal for work on Kennedy Elementary School was awarded to CM3 Building Solutions at a cost of \$389,803. It will be partially paid for by \$160,524 remaining from phase two of the project, and some of the work will include installation of window replacement and shade installation, new air vents and air conditioning in classrooms and the multipurpose room.

Board members also approved the purchase of a drug dog for the Nanticoke Police Department at a cost of \$1,000 to \$1,500 at the request of police Chief James Cheshinski. Perrone said the district would be able to use the dog any time it wanted.

3/8/2009

### **High school senior raises more than \$2,000 with Elvis tribute show**

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Everybody in the Greater Nanticoke Area High School knows senior Josh Slosky. He greases back his hair, wears tight jeans and a white T-shirt every day and sings Elvis Presley songs.

Though he is only 18, Slosky grew up listening to music from the ’50s and ’60s, music that he says doesn’t sound like anything else today. His love of classic rock ‘n’ roll led him to become a young Elvis tribute artist.

Last week, he and his band played their first Elvis tribute concert at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School auditorium. The concert served as his senior graduation project and raised more than \$2,000.

Slosky treated the audience to quite a performance, playing his keyboard with fury like Jerry Lee Lewis, but dressed in an Elvis-style gold-sequined jacket. Slosky can sneer like Elvis and mimic that unmistakable deep voice.

“My mom always told me I had an old soul, as weird as that sounds. I just have a love for the past,” said Slosky, of Nanticoke. “It is really neat how they looked. I liked the way they grease their hair and wear leather jackets.”

Slosky’s concert originally was going to raise funds for an area non-profit organization. But because a number of Nanticoke students have lost their lives in car accidents, Slosky put the contributions toward a memorial plaque in remembrance of those students.

The concert raised more than Slosky expected, so the funds may go to something larger than a plaque like a bench or stone in remembrance of those who died.

“It will just say to all who have lost their lives in the high school community. You can’t forget that kind of thing,”

Slosky said. "The best way to make times better is through music, through the arts."

Slosky's parents Ed and Sandy Slosky introduced Elvis' music to him. He took piano lessons since he was 10, and didn't want to quit only because Elvis usually played guitar or nothing at all. So, he describes his performance as an Elvis "tribute," rather than an imitation.

Slosky has only performed in public a few other times. Last year, he and his band took the stage at Pope John Paul Elementary School. He also stepped on stage at church functions and for the Nanticoke Youth Drug Task Force. Following the show at the high school, Slosky said he was glad that the concert went well and promises the performance will not be his last.

"You have to go out there and do the job," Slosky said. "I guess you could say it is a rush."

3/5/2009

### **Nanticoke looks to fill board vacancies**

### **City Council also makes changes to police, fire retirement accounts.**

Ian Campbell - Times Leader

City officials on Wednesday invited interested residents to apply for a number of committee positions on various boards and commissions in the city.

Available seats include two four-year terms on the Planning Commission, and one vacancy on the Zoning Board, said interim City Clerk Mary Cheshinski. City Council reappointed Chester Biggs to the General Municipal Authority and will be reappointing two members currently on the Zoning Board to new terms, she said.

Anyone interested in the vacancies should contact the city clerk's office.

Council noted it would need to vote to accept the city Recreation Board's bylaws before it could act on proposed changes to how the board appointed members to ad hoc committees. Those bylaws are expected to be available for a vote at the April meeting.

In other business, council approved a change in how police and fire retirement accounts can be used.

Eligible employees would be able to direct deferred retirement revenue within the existing retirement fund, and as a result the city would not be liable for any underperformance of the funds involved.

The changes in both pension plans had to be dealt with in the form of ordinances, so each will receive a second reading before taking effect.

Council also accepted an engineering report on bridges in the city that noted that although the North Market Street Bridge is adequate for the traffic it carries, it still should be looked at for replacement in the next five years.

Among other concerns, the city should look at repairing guard rails, the bridge surface and erosion areas in the river bed upstream of the bridge, according to the report.

Also, it was learned increased funding for the city from the federal economic stimulus package would likely come in the form of 25 percent increases in the Community Development block grants. The grants had already been dedicated to paving work on sections of Church, Noble and Ridge streets, council noted.

3/5/2009

### **Nanticoke bridge needs repairs**

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The bridge on North Market Street near Lower Broadway should be replaced, council heard on Wednesday.

Daryl Pawlush, representing city engineer Michael Pasonick Associates, gave a report on the city's bridges, and said the one on North Market Street is "in inadequate shape to handle the traffic that flows across it."

He said the city should have the bridge put on Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's list for replacement within the next five years. The bridge doesn't need to have a weight limit posted on it, Pawlush said, but recommended a list of repairs to be done, some immediately.

The bridge on the access road to the industrial park is in "good, sound condition," but needs some repairs to the road and culvert, according to Pawlush. Additionally, he said the new bridge on Union Street requires regular inspections by PennDOT.

In other business:

City officials might use their approximately \$350,000 of 2009 Office of Community Development money to repave Church Street from Hanover Street to Market Street; West Noble Street from Fairchild Street to Line Street; and West Ridge Street from Hanover Street to Line Street. The federal funds must be used in low- to moderate-income areas.

Council passed the first reading of an ordinance to require recycling at community events attended by 200 or more people. The city's trash hauler, J.P. Mascaro, offered to provide free recycling bins for use at the events, City Clerk Betsy Cheshinski said.

Council approved the transfer of a liquor license from Pittston to the former DJ's Bar and Grill at 187 E. Ridge St. Joe Lokuta, owner of the Pizza Bella restaurants in Nanticoke and Plains Township, bought the property recently and plans to turn it into a pub-style bar and restaurant.

Council passed the first reading of an ordinance that solicitor William T. Finnegan Jr. said would ensure outdoor wood-burning boilers are installed correctly and don't create a nuisance to neighboring properties.

Russ Susko, who owns a property on Pine Street, presented council with a petition from residents asking that a fire-damaged property "in deplorable condition" at 140 Pine St. be demolished. The city's code enforcement officer is looking into it, Mayor John Bushko said.

3/5/2009

### **Nanticoke Area Notes**

Pam Urbanski writes "Nanticoke Area Notes" every other Thursday. Story ideas and news items can be e-mailed to her at [pamurb806@aol.com](mailto:pamurb806@aol.com).

I can remember being a student in elementary school and waiting for the day we'd welcome a guest reader into our school. It was someone who would come into the classroom and read a great story with colorful pictures.

That special day is coming soon for second grade students who attend Kennedy Elementary and Head Start in Nanticoke. They will join with other second grade students across the Wyoming Valley when they celebrate the 13th annual Community Reading Day on Thursday, April 30.

The event is held to promote literacy and to encourage students to read. It also gives business leaders within the community an opportunity to go into classrooms and talk with students about their jobs and the places they work. They let children know that Northeastern Pennsylvania is a great place to build a life and career.

Thomas Leary, president of Luzerne County Community College, has been a community reader for years. Leary enjoys reading to the students, as well as interacting with them.

"When I go into the classroom, I like to sit and talk with the students. I find out what they value and appreciate and what is important to them. This usually leads to a great conversation about their education," Leary said.

"I tell them where I work and what I do. I explain they need to work hard while in school and that wonderful opportunities await them when they grow up, including going to college."

Since its inception in 1977, the annual Community Reading Day has touched the lives of more than 140,000 second grade students. Nearly 5,000 volunteers have read to students. The books that are read become part of the classroom library.

The South Valley Chamber of Commerce in Nanticoke will partner with other chambers of commerce to make this day possible.

Karen Gallia, economic development assistant for the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, has the huge task of coordinating the program. "I don't know who enjoys the program more, the students or the adult readers," Gallia said. If you enjoy sharing the joy of reading and have an hour to spend reading to Nanticoke area students, call Karen at 823-2101 by Wednesday.

### **Group selling palm crosses**

The youth group of the Parish Community of Nanticoke is selling palm crosses.

The crosses are 36 x 24 inches and fit easily into the ground. The cost is \$10 and orders are due by Monday, March 16. To place an order, call the parish office at 735-4833.

### **St. Mary's holding trip**

St. Mary's Travel Club of Nanticoke is sponsoring a trip to Lancaster on Saturday, April 18.

The day includes a lunch buffet and comedy show at the Rainbow Dinner Theater, shopping at Hershey Farms and a tour of the Mount Hope Winery. Cost is \$88 and registration with payment is due March 22. For more information, call Helen at 735-5183.

### **Library friends to meet**

Friends of the Mill Memorial Library, 495 E. Main St., will meet Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. in the Alta Harrington Room. Carol Sokowski will preside.

### **Time to spring ahead**

Daylight savings time begins at 2 a.m. Sunday. Remember to set your clocks ahead one hour.



3/4/2009

### **LCCC will get \$1.5 million in gaming funds**

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Luzerne County Community College is getting a total of \$1.5 million in state gaming money over three years to build the Culinary Arts Institute at Market and Main streets in Nanticoke.

As soon as the remaining \$3 million in grants are ready, construction can begin on the \$7.5 million building, LCCC President Thomas P. Leary said.

“There is continuous discussion on the building. Basically, all the plans have been laid out. Now, it’s just a matter of securing all the grants from the state,” he said. “Obviously, we don’t have any issue with it; it’s just a question of having them secured, so we can go ahead and finance the purchase.”

Nanticoke city officials applied to the state on behalf of LCCC for the \$1.5 million in gaming revenue, which comes from Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs. The college got the first \$500,000 installment last year. There is also \$2 million in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program funding and a \$1 million Growing Greener grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection to be used for the project.

State Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, urged college officials to move fast in picking a developer, so they wouldn’t lose the money. In January, the LCCC board of trustees selected Scranton-based Mark Development to build the Culinary Arts Institute on the site of the former senior center and the Nanticoke Housing Authority-owned former Susquehanna Coal Co. office.

3/3/2009

### **Gesecki Comes Up Big**

Bill Arsenault - Times Leader

The Navy women’s track team ended Bucknell’s seven-year reign in the Patriot League Indoor Championships recently and senior Abby Gesecki (Nanticoke) had a big part in the effort.

Gesecki finished second in the 500-meter dash in a personal best time of 1:14.37. That effort was good enough to qualify for the IC4A Championships. She also helped the 1,600 relay team finish third and the 3,200 relay squad finish fourth.

“Abby peaked at exactly the right time,” coach Carla Criste said. “Her times have been coming down consistently over the past few weeks. She is already qualified for the Eastern Regionals, so the pressure is off. With Abby’s winning attitude, the sky is the limit.”

2/24/2009

### **Six Luzerne County parishes appeal consolidation measure**

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At least six parishes in the Diocese of Scranton are formally appealing Bishop Joseph F. Martino’s decision to consolidate and close their churches over the next three years.

The six churches are Sacred Heart of Jesus, Wilkes-Barre; **Holy Child, Nanticoke**; St. Francis, Miners Mills; **St. Stanislaus, Nanticoke**; St. Francis of Assisi, West Hazleton; and a parish in Avoca, according to the Council of Parishes of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Diocese spokesman Bill Genello said, “The Diocese will address appeals according to canonical process,” but had no further comment on parish appeals.

Although the 10-day deadline for appealing has passed, Noreen Foti, president of the Sacred Heart Wilkes-Barre Foundation, believes other groups could be able to appeal. Those parishes could ask for an extension or, depending when Martino signed the documents making the parish reconfiguration official, it’s possible the 10-day limit has not yet passed, she said.

About five other parishes have approached Foti in the last few days asking for information on appealing the bishop’s decision, she said.

Many of the groups appealing the decision to close their parish are arguing the consolidation sites selected are too small, not easily accessible for handicapped or elderly parishioners, need extensive repairs or lack adequate restrooms, kitchens and parking.]

“People want to know what was the basis for selecting the sites, and they aren’t getting answers,” Foti said. Carl Puschauer is helping head up the appeals process for St. Francis Church, and said he is going to fight Martino’s decision as long as necessary. Many other parishioners are volunteering to help spread the message that they believe St. Francis deserves to stay open, he said.

“There is no question that our building is structurally perfect, and everything else is up to date, and it’s practically brand new,” Puschauer said. “It’s only 45 years old.”

Martino has 30 days to respond to the appeals, according to Canon Law. If the appeals are denied, the parishioner groups will follow the appeal process laid out in Canon Law and appeal to other church authorities.

2/19/2009

### **Nanticoke fire departments join forces to purchase new truck**

Pam Urbanski writes “Nanticoke Area Notes” every other Thursday. Story ideas and news items can be e-mailed to her at pamurb806@aol.com.

In order to fight fires effectively and quickly, firefighters must have the proper equipment and up-to-date fire apparatus. Presently, the City of Nanticoke is relying on a 1999 ladder truck to respond to structure fires; a 1974 engine that is housed in the Hanover section of Nanticoke, and a 2001 engine that is stationed at fire headquarters on East Ridge Street.

The department also uses an engine on loan from Hanover Township. The truck is scheduled to be returned in two months. “We’ve been lucky so far,” said Nanticoke Fire Chief Michael Bohan. “Anything that is more than 20 years old comes into question. We need to think of the safety of our residents and our firefighters.”

Thanks to the dedication and support of volunteer firefighters, the city will add a much-needed new truck to its fleet. Firefighters answered a total of 620 calls last year, including 35 structure fires. Some of the other calls included motor vehicle accidents, false alarms, vehicle fires and emergency medical assists.

“The volunteer firefighters in this city saw a need to add to our truck fleet and they decided they would join together and help to finance a new truck. Without them we could not have done it,” Chief Bohan said.

Firefighters from Lape, Mowrey, Stickney, Washington, Hanover and Pioneer Hook and Ladder fire companies each have agreed to pay \$5,000 per year for four years for a total of \$120,000. The city will pay the rest, which is a little more than \$110,000. The volunteer fire companies will use money from grants given to them by the state to cover most of the loans.

The 2009 mini-pumper is state-of-the art, holds more gallons of water than the other pumpers and is four-wheel drive. It also has seating for four firefighters. “It’s really is a nice piece of equipment that makes firefighting a little safer and easier,” Bohan said.

The fire department will take delivery of the truck in early summer.

### **A new truck for Honey Pot**

Another fire company in Nanticoke also is replacing a very old fire truck that no longer meets safety standards. Honey Pot Volunteer Fire Company is independent of the other fire companies in the city. The department responds to all fires in Honey Pot and when there is a fire in Nanticoke they stand by ready to assist Nanticoke firefighters. The company currently owns a 1965 truck that has seen better days.

“We really can’t rebuild the engine any more,” said Assistant Fire Chief Chet Kopco. “When parts break we have to search junk yards to find a fit. It’s either that or we have to cast parts, which is really expensive. This involves sending the broken part to a company and having them make a new part from a cast of the old one.”

Honey Pot volunteer firefighters are taking on a huge commitment in purchasing a 2003 mini-pumper. They will pay about \$800 a month for the next 20 years. The pumper uses water and/or a compressed air foam system. “It’s easier for our firefighters because foam is lighter than water,” said Kopco.

Kopco said this system allows for less manpower and less water damage for the homeowner. “You can also pump and move, which means we don’t have to be hooked up to a hydrant and stay in one place. We can get to brush fires a lot quicker.”

Cost of this pumper is \$100,000. The company will need to bring the truck up to 2009 government standards, but it should be delivered by May.

In order to help meet the monthly loan payment, the fire company has set up several fundraisers. An all-you-can-eat breakfast will be held March 1 from 7 a.m. to noon at the fire department. Cost is \$6 for adults and \$3 for children. A ham raffle will be held at Westside Playground on March 28 beginning at 7 p.m. Food and drink will be available for purchase along with raffles for hams and sausage and gift baskets. For more information, call Chet at 735-7030.

## **Society holding Mardi Gras**

The combined Holy Name Society of St. Mary's, Holy Trinity, St. Stanislaus and Holy Child churches will hold its annual Mardi Gras celebration Saturday from 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. in the Pope John Paul II School hall. Oldies music will be provided by the Cadillacs. Cost in advance is \$15 per person, which includes dancing and refreshments. For more information, call Tony at 256-3914, Xavier at 735-6017, Millard at 735-2114 or Jim at 735-8108.

## **Ash Wednesday service**

An Ash Wednesday service will be held at 7 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church, 231 State St., Nanticoke. The Rev. Donald Nice will be guest pastor. All are welcome.

2/19/2009

## **Nanticoke council approves contract with city firefighters**

eskrapits@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2072

Months of negotiations between city officials and firefighters ended successfully Wednesday, when council unanimously passed a new contract.

All nine members of the International Association of Firefighters Nanticoke Local 2655 also voted in favor of the contract, which runs from Jan. 1, 2009, to Dec. 31, 2012, with the option for the city to extend it through 2013.

"I think this is a very good contract for the city and for the firefighters. There were a lot of concessions on both sides," said Councilman Brent Makarczyk, who represented the city at the bargaining table.

Firefighter Greg Grzymski, who led negotiations for his department, said he and his fellow union members didn't want a "long, drawn-out battle" like their brother firefighters had in Scranton — a city which, like Nanticoke, is labeled financially distressed by the state.

"Everybody understood, us being an Act 47 community, and the economic plight in the country is in, we weren't going to get everything we wanted," Grzymski said.

Scranton firefighters had been fighting city officials' efforts to apply cost-containment measures from Scranton's 2002 financial recovery plan to their contracts. In January, seven Commonwealth Court judges upheld Scranton officials' argument that Act 47, the state law for distressed municipalities, trumps the Policemen and Firemen Collective Bargaining Act (Act 111).

Some concessions by Nanticoke firefighters include receiving nine paid holidays instead of 13, and agreeing to pay 2.5 percent of their health insurance costs in 2010, 5 percent in 2011, and 7.5 percent in 2012. In addition, the minimum manning clause is removed, meaning there is no limit to how few firefighters must be on duty, and there will be more part-timers, Makarczyk said.

Firefighters will get raises of 2 percent in 2009 and 2010, 3 percent in 2011, and 4 percent in 2012. They will also receive an additional 25 cents for each hour worked between 5 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Members of council complimented Makarczyk and Grzymski for their efforts in forging the new contract.

Next to settle is the police contract, which expired at the same time as the firefighters': Dec. 31, 2008.

Mayor John Bushko said police negotiations are "pretty well in (their) final stages."

In other business, council passed the first reading of a recycling ordinance.

The city already has a recycling program, but Solicitor William Finnegan said the ordinance is required by the state Department of Environmental Protection for the city to be eligible for grants.

What's new in the ordinance is a provision that recycling will be mandatory at any event with 200 or more people in attendance, such as Musicfest and the annual Christmas party in Patriot Square.

Resident James Samselski asked whether the city would make recycling bins available at large events. City officials agreed it would have to be worked out.

2/15/2009

## **Firefighters can use some help**

slong@timesleader.com

The Honey Pot Active Firemen are upgrading. While they are proud of the 1965 FWD full-size engine sitting in their headquarters it is too out of date to continue using safely.

So the Firemen are spending \$120,000 to acquire a newer piece of equipment.

Within the next month, the non-profit group will purchase a 2003 Pierce midi pumper for \$100,000 from the Alpha Fire Company #1 of Littlestown, using a 20-year loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Assistant Fire Chief Chester

Kopco said. The new apparatus will have a 500-gallon pump, 300-gallon water tank and a 20-gallon foam-holding tank. Another \$20,000 will be spent to bring the equipment up to 2009 National Fire Protection Standards as required by the U.S. Fire Administration, Kopco said. The administration recommends any apparatus 20 years or older be replaced or placed in reserve status for the firefighter safety.

So the Active Firemen will be hosting several fundraisers to help cover the \$800 monthly payment for the new piece of equipment.

Kopco and Honey Pot Active Firemen President Tony Prushinski are especially proud of the fact that their organization is paying for this using their own money. While they do apply for state and federal grants, they are not automatically entitled to grant money received by the Nanticoke Fire Department because the Honey Pot Active Firemen is an independent fire company, Kopco said. The Nanticoke Fire Department is also acquiring a new truck with money being donated by the city's five other volunteer fire departments.

The Honey Pot Active Firemen originally hoped to purchase a new pumper truck, but couldn't afford a \$250,000 price tag. This 2003 piece will be smaller than the current equipment and smaller than a new pumper truck, but it can pump water and foam, which Kopco said will ensure the fire company is getting a jump start on the future of firefighting "(Foam) doesn't require as much manpower as a water line because of the injection of air into a line with the foam ... It spreads a retardant on the fire so it is quicker to knock down. There is less property damage with it," Kopco said. Their parent company, the Honey Pot Volunteer Hose Company, owns the 1965 engine, so it will be up to them to decide what to do with the equipment.

"Most likely they will wind up selling it, probably to a collector. It is too old to give to another fire company," Kopco said.

How to help

For more information on becoming a member of the Honey Pot Active Firemen or donating call President Tony Prushinski at 735-0508 and Assistant Chief Chester Kopco at 735-7030.

Fundraising events:

- All You Can Eat Breakfast at Honey Pot Fire Department Headquarters, 13 Honey Pot St. from 7 a.m. – noon March 1
- Honey Pot Ham Raffle at Westside Playground on West Grand Street at 7 p.m. March 28
- Welcome to Summer Festival at Honey Pot Fire Department Headquarters, 13 Honey Pot St., May 30, all day event
- Cabbage Roll on Aug. 15, on N. Market in Honey Pot section of Nanticoke

2/13/2009

### **GNA makes adjustments to district calendar**

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Greater Nanticoke Area School Board has changed the district calendar due to snow days and a teacher in-service. Students are off today because teachers are having a drill with state police on what to do in the event of an emergency. Instead, students will have school on Feb. 16, previously scheduled as a day off for Presidents Day.

To make up for three snow days, there will be classes on June 5, 8 and 9. Graduation is tentatively scheduled for June 9, unless there are more days off for bad weather.

Much of Thursday's meeting was taken up by spirited discussion about the need to stop perceiving the district in a negative light.

Greater Nanticoke Area's math test scores have gone up, and reading scores are being worked on, Superintendent Anthony Perrone said. The district's fund balance was never as good — it was \$5 million at the end of last school year — as it is under the current board, he said, noting, "and we don't skin you alive with your taxes."

"We haven't had a problem since we booted out the big spenders," GNA Taxpayers Forum President Hank Marks admitted.

However, fellow forum member Hank Kellar was critical of the effectiveness of the district's curriculum.

District officials have gone to the Wyoming Area School District, which has the highest test scores in the region, to look at its curriculum and bring it back to GNA through a consultant, Perrone said.

2/13/2009

### **GNA superintendent defends test scores**

**Tony Perrone says district has implemented changes that helped students improve.**

slong@timesleader.com

Upset about a letter to the editor that recently appeared, Greater Nanticoke Area School District Tony Perrone said at Thursday night's school board meeting that he wanted to set the record straight about the district's test scores. In the past the district has experienced problems with Pennsylvania System of School Assessment test scores, but the district revamped the math program and is now working to revamp the science program to help students perform better. Perrone proudly announced that "Nanticoke Area made the largest jump in math" throughout Luzerne County for its 2007-08 standardized math tests.

Nanticoke 11th graders ranked third out of all other 11th graders across Luzerne County, with only students at Wyoming Area and Crestwood school districts scoring better, Perrone said. Breaking down the numbers, he said 21.7 percent of students placed advanced in math, 36.4 percent were proficient, 16.5 percent were basic and 25 percent were below basic.

The district's fifth and sixth graders also ranked third out of all other school districts in their grade levels, Perrone noted. "The math went up when we changed it, this year we are doing the same with reading," Perrone said.

In other business, residents Henry Kellar and Henry Marks, president of the Nanticoke Taxpayers Forum, asked the school board several questions regarding the district's work sessions and how curriculum is developed.

Marks said he recalled a time when the district held the work sessions that were open to the public.

District solicitor Vito DeLuca responded by saying the only meetings that are closed as the executive session meetings are when the board discusses personnel issues.

In other business, students are getting a day off today because teachers are having an in-service work day, Perrone announced.

Originally students also were scheduled to be off Monday for President's Day, but now they will attend class.

Other snow make-up days scheduled for later this year are June 5, 8 and 9.

2/6/2009

### **Nanticoke council appoints pair to civil-service board**

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At its recent meeting, Nanticoke council made appointments to several volunteer positions.

Anthony Nork and Larry Karnes were appointed to fill two vacancies on the civil service commission, which deals with police and fire department candidates. Council also voted to extend the civil service list and not give a test this year, since the city probably won't be using it, Mayor John Bushko said. The city isn't hiring.

Josephine Batista was tapped for another term on the Nanticoke Housing Authority, which manages the city's low-income and senior housing. Council named tax collector/treasurer Al Wytoshek as Keystone Opportunity Zone coordinator.

The unpaid position involves serving as liaison between the city and the county on KOZ properties. Councilman Jon Metta said Wytoshek already handles most of the paperwork.

In other business, Councilman Joseph Dougherty said the public works department has used 670 tons of road salt this season.

Solicitor William Finnegan said he is in the process of updating the ordinance that requires sidewalks to be cleared after snowstorms.

2/6/2009

### **Two towns seek state funds for sewers**

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New state grant initiatives totaling \$1.2 billion could help two cash-strapped South Valley municipalities with expensive sewer problems.

Gov. Ed Rendell signed legislation in July that created the \$800 million "H2O PA" fund to provide grants for water, sewer and flood protection projects.

Then, in November, Pennsylvanians voted to take out a \$400 million bond allowing the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority to award grants and loans for water and sewer systems. Luzerne County voters approved the referendum by 77,791 yes votes to 43,015 no — or 64 percent to 36 percent — Bureau of Elections statistics show. Officials in municipalities needing sewer improvements are hurrying to submit applications for the grants, which are just getting started. Plymouth Township supervisors asked, through their engineer Nathanael Tompkins of Clough Harbour & Associates, for \$4.5 million for a state-mandated sewer project the township can't afford.

“Everyone is hoping to get some piece of it,” Supervisor Chairwoman Gale Conrad said. “We’ve applied for everything out there in the past few years we could apply for. We can only continue to hope we get a chunk.”

On Sept. 15, 2003, the state Department of Environmental Protection mandated Plymouth Township install a sewer system to replace on-lot septic systems that were discharging into the Susquehanna River. The cost for adding 278 new sewer connections to the existing 213 is in excess of \$6 million. Plymouth Township, declared financially distressed by the state in July 2004 and only now getting out of debt, can’t afford it, Conrad said.

She acknowledged Plymouth Township isn’t alone.

“There are so many communities that need money like this. It’s almost recognizing there isn’t enough to go around,” Conrad said.

**Neighboring Nanticoke** — also financially distressed — needs to upgrade its sewer system, including separating sewers tied to storm drains and getting rid of “wildcat” sewers that drain into the Susquehanna River, Mayor John Bushko said.

Nanticoke council voted to apply for a \$4.22 million H2O PA grant, the maximum they were allowed, although the project will cost \$8 million, city engineer Daryl Pawlush of Michael A. Pasonick Associates said. The grant requires a 50-percent match from the city, he said.

The state probably won’t award Nanticoke the full amount, Pawlush said, but the city should at least try to get its request in, so if it is unsuccessful, city officials can find out why and try for the next round of grants.

2/5/2009

### **Nanticoke street plan hits speed bump**

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The downtown streetscaping plan has hit a snag, but council moved ahead with a plan to provide parking for Luzerne County Community College on Wednesday.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation notified city officials they didn’t use proper procedure in picking the engineer for the streetscape project, Mayor John Bushko said. He disputed that, saying they had followed directions regarding the advertising and selection process. Bushko said PennDOT is stalling on approving a plan to repave Alden Road using federal money — a plan he said was supposed to be approved three years ago.

The streetscape project involves redesigning certain downtown streets, starting with Main Street. City engineer Pasonick Associates was selected for the project because the firm has a working relationship with the city, Nanticoke Administrator Holly Quinn said. She said city officials are trying to resolve any deficiencies, and hopefully delay to the project will be minimal.

“Our first goal is ensuring the college has sufficient parking, and our second goal is to get the first phase of the streetscape finished in time for the college’s opening (in fall of 2010),” she said.

Luzerne County Community College recently signed a lease-purchase agreement with Nanticoke’s municipal authority for the Kanjorski Center on East Main Street. The school plans to renovate and use the building as its Health Sciences Center.

The lease calls for “the non-exclusive right to a minimum of 272 parking spaces” for the college. Council approved the second reading of a permit parking ordinance for downtown. There’s only one more to go.

The ordinance would only allow people with LCCC permits to park on certain streets from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Mondays. Anyone without a permit would be fined \$15.

Affected streets are: the north side of East Main Street from Locust Street to North Walnut Street; both sides of Arch Street from North Market Street to Locust Street; and the north side of Arch Street from Locust Street to Broadway. The former CVS drugstore building next to the Kanjorski Center is slated for demolition to make way for more parking, said Hank Marks of the municipal authority, which owns the building.

2/5/2009

### **Nanticoke revises chiefs’ pension plans**

slong@timesleader.com

Council members approved changes Wednesday to the police and fire pension plan by creating a deferred retirement option program for the police and fire chiefs.

Because Police Chief James Cheshinski and Fire Chief Mike Bohan are top level executives in their departments, they had to resign from their unions as of Jan. 1, as stipulated in the Act 47 Recovery Plan.

Without being members of their unions, the chiefs don't receive additional contributions to their pension funds. Cheshinski and Bohan will retire and then begin participating in the deferred retirement option program, which then allows them to continue working in their positions for the next three years.

They will earn their regular salaries, but will not receive their monthly pension checks immediately.

Their monthly pension would be deposited in a deferred retirement account. So if Cheshinski and Bohan do retire in three years they would receive a check with the lump sum amount of the money paid into the deferred retirement account over the three years.

"This helps the city retain what we believe is excellent management and be able to help make transitions for the new chiefs to be as seamless as possible and be able to train their replacements," Councilman Brent Makarczyk.

The city will not incur any additional cost for this program, Mayor John Bushko said.

This program would also be available to any other non-union city employee, city solicitor Bill Finnegan said.

The city does not have to offer this program, but can if it so desires to help the chiefs continue to pay into a retirement-style account, Finnegan said.

City officials also authorized engineer Daryl Pawlush to apply for a \$4.22 million grant from the state to pay for water and sewer improvements in the city. The H2O Pennsylvania grant just recently became available after voters across the state approved the measure in November, Pawlush said.

Pawlush cautioned that by just applying didn't automatically entitle the city to get the grant, but it puts it in the running for the money.

2/5/2009

### **The Rev. Jim Nash talks about the consolidation of churches**

Pam Urbanski writes "Nanticoke Area Notes" every other Thursday. Story ideas, new items or comments can be e-mailed to her at [pamurb806@aol.com](mailto:pamurb806@aol.com).

It was back in July 2004, on the one-year anniversary of his appointment as the bishop of Scranton, that Most Rev. Joseph Martino shared his hopes and concerns with the Catholic faithful in the Diocese of Scranton.

In the pastoral letter, the bishop raised many important issues. One was the spiritual and pastoral renewal of the Diocese of Scranton.

That will mean "we need to look at every one of our structures, i.e. our parishes, schools, institutions and programs."

One of the concerns the bishop addressed was whether these entities were right for the 21st century.

Another was "Mass schedules that are no longer suitable by aging and fewer priests." Parish pastoral councils and finance councils were implemented by pastors at the request of the bishop.

All parishes began a period of self-study, which allowed each parish, in the words of Bishop Martino, "to see its strengths and weaknesses, its proud accomplishments and its inevitable deficiencies, to see if there is a better way to serve the neighborhood of parishes." Through it all he asked for prayer.

In December 2007, a meeting was held for all priests and deacons in the diocese of to explain, in detail, a planning project named Called to Holiness and Mission Pastoral Planning in the Diocese of Scranton.

At the meeting, the clergy learned parishes would be restructured to "most effectively witness the presence of the risen Christ in all parts of the diocese and effectively serve the entire faith community and the larger church." Parishes would soon fall under one of four models: consolidation, linked, partnership or team.

Just like at other churches in the diocese, parish core teams were being formed at all six parishes in Nanticoke.

Their first task would be to evaluate individual parishes. One finding was that in all parishes the number of funerals greatly outnumbered baptisms.

"In one year we had 120 funerals compared to a minimal number of baptisms and children receiving the sacraments of reconciliation and eucharist," said the Rev. Jim Nash, pastor of the parish community of Holy Child, Holy Trinity, St. Mary of Czestochowa and St. Stanislaus.

The parish core team also had to face the reality that pews are empty, finances are not what they used to be, there is a decreasing number of clergy and buildings are in need of repair.

"We have a declining income and population. One-third of registered families actively practice their faith, and we have a decreasing number of clergy," Nash said. "I am proud of the way our active parishioners support the parish and our programs to include things like Catholic education. We have a lot of senior citizens in our town who are on fixed incomes. Our economy is not good. Everyone is affected. Young families struggle to made ends meet."

Once parish core teams did their initial studies, a cluster core team was formed. This team was made up of parishioners from the four parishes mentioned, as well as St. Francis and St. Joseph churches. They poured over pages and pages of

notes and discussed their findings

They attended diocesan training sessions held by the Reid Group, which was hired by the diocese to facilitate the pastoral planning process.

At the training sessions, everyone received a comprehensive planning guide that provided details about the process and its stages. Prayer was also an important part of the process.

They were faced with the difficult task of choosing one of the four models and sending recommendations to the bishop, who would make the final decision with appropriate consultation.

"I am very proud of the cluster core team," Nash said. "It was not an easy process, we had our ups and downs, but the team did its job. Gail Fromm, who was appointed by the diocese to facilitate our cluster group and our meetings, was impressed by what she saw among the people in Nanticoke. The first recommendation was to have one large church that could accommodate the most people and a new church. Holy Trinity is the largest church seating approximately 650 people."

Continuing, he said, "The second recommendation was to have a secondary church in case there is a need for additional masses, funerals or weddings or to use for smaller celebrations such as daily Mass. That church is St. Mary's. The recommendation to the bishop was consolidation and this past weekend he went with the recommendation of the cluster group. The need for St. Mary's will be reviewed in a few years. The consolidation is to take place no later than July 2010," Nash explained.

Nash is happy with that timetable. "I think it gives us an opportunity to process what happened, to deal with the emotions that so many are feeling right now. Many have invested their whole lives into these parishes. We have to talk and have discussions among our parish groups.

Talking helps and makes people feel better. Our Catholic faith is so rich with rituals. We need to ritualize the closings, to take artifacts from parishes and put them in the new parish. The whole time we need to remember that it is not an end but a beginning," he said.

"Our parishes will be better served when we can combine our services and ministries. Financially, we will be better off and able to offer more programs for our people," Nash added.

Frank Wempa has been a member of St. Mary's Church for 60 some years. Both of his grandfathers helped build the church. He is confident the transition will be a smooth one.

"We have been through this before when four of our parishes remained independent, but were served by one pastor, Father Nash. He is a great priest in every sense of the word. He helped us transition smoothly before. I know our parishioners will welcome the parishioners of St. Francis and St. Joseph's with open arms. We will be one in a new church. Not ours, not theirs. It can happen if we are all willing to make it happen," Wempa said.

Paul Yanas is a life-long parishioner of St. Francis Church and he received all of his sacraments there.

He, too, has been through this before. St. Francis closed more than a year ago when the structure was deemed unsafe.

The parishioners of St. Francis now worship at St. Joseph's. He is upset to see church closings, but thinks it's necessary.

"When you go to Mass there are so many empty pews. We don't need as many churches as we did before. I think it might be the best thing for us because we can pull our resources and programs together," Yanas said.

The next step is for the implementation team from Nanticoke to meet and start discussions about how to best move to consolidating all parishes into a new parish at the site of Holy Trinity Church.

One thing they will be discussing is parking. "That is one issue we will need to tackle," Nash said.

He also thinks the challenge will be to get people thinking in a different way.

"I am in awe of the people here in Nanticoke. We will have our challenges, but they will do it. We need to work together to create a new, vibrant parish, as well as a community with greater possibilities of doing ministry.

"So many of our parishioners' ancestors came to Nanticoke to build a church in which to practice their Catholic faith. Things have changed and we need to have something for the next generation. They would want that," he emphasized.

### **St. Andrew's soup sale**

St. Andrew's Church, 12 E. Kirmar Ave., Alden, is sponsoring a homemade beef vegetable soup sale. Orders must be placed by Thursday, Feb. 12, by calling Dorothy at 735-2126 or Edith at 735-2662. Cost is \$5 a quart. Take-out containers are provided. Orders can be picked up Feb. 21 from 10 a.m. to noon in the lower level of the church.

2/9/2009

**Newport Twp. ambulance association delays merger with Nanticoke**

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Members of Newport Township Firemen's Community Ambulance Association have put their merger with the



Nanticoke Community Ambulance Association on hold until they get answers to some questions. The proposed new company, South Valley Regional Ambulance Inc., was incorporated Jan. 9 at 901 S. Hanover St. in Nanticoke as a nonprofit organization, according to Pennsylvania Department of State records. Newport Township ambulance members voted on Jan. 19 to accept the South Valley Regional Ambulance Inc. as their managing company. The vote was 3-3, with former association president John Floryshak breaking the tie. But new Newport Township ambulance President Dan Kowalski says the action is invalid because one member who voted did not meet residency requirements. Kowalski, who voted against the merger, says it's on hold until the association clarifies who is eligible to vote. He said he also wants to see the Nanticoke ambulance association's finances — the two associations signed a confidentiality agreement — and has some questions he would like answered. "I want something in writing from the board president what the payroll and benefits will be, whether they will take all our employees, and whether there really will be a volunteer aspect of it," Kowalski said. "I think it's fair before we enter into this merger, to find out what the end result will be." Bernie Norieka, president of the Nanticoke ambulance association and now of the South Valley ambulance board, questioned whether all the votes taken at Newport Township Ambulance Association's Jan. 19 meeting were valid — including the votes to elect officers. "You can't declare part of one meeting null and void, and let the rest of the meeting stand," Norieka said. Kowalski didn't think election of officers would be an issue, since all but two nominations — including his — were uncontested and passed unanimously, but said he would look into it. Norieka said Kowalski, as part of Newport Township Ambulance Association's merger committee, "had total access to all the financial information they needed or required," but he said Kowalski chose not to review it. The decision to go ahead with the merger is in the Newport Township association's hands, Norieka said. Kowalski said the Newport Township ambulance association wants township residents' input on the merger.

2/3/2009

### **Bieski named EAGL Specialist of the Week**

ON CAMPUS - Bill Arsenault - Times Leader

West Virginia University sophomore Amy Bieski earned East Atlantic Gymnastics League Gymnast of the Week. A week earlier, Bieski of Nanticoke (Northeast Gymnastics) was named EAGL Specialist of the Week. The two awards mark the seventh and eighth weekly honors for Bieski in her two seasons with the Mountaineers. Bieski's recent honor came after she captured her first All-Around title of the season with 39.175 points in her team's 194.775-192.700 victory over Pittsburgh in Morgantown. She won the vault (9.90) was second in the beam (9.60) and floor (9.875) and third on the bars (9.80). All of her scores were personal bests. Bieski beat the floor mark with a 9.90 for second place last weekend when West Virginia finished behind Maryland and ahead of George Washington University and Rutgers in the Alumni Meet in Morgantown. Mountaineers coach Linda Burdette now has 601 career victories. "Amy is off to a great start," Burdette said. "She is an amazing athlete and a wonderful young lady. She is an extremely hard worker and very focused in the gym and all that hard work and focus transfers to her competition performance." And Burdette sees even bigger things down the road. "Each meet her confidence seems to be growing and even after a routine with a mistake, she just becomes more determined to work harder and continue to improve," the coach said.

1/31/2009

### **GNA hires relative of board member**

**Allison Masakowski has a good background in education, says one of her interviewers.**

slong@timesleader.com

The newest secretary in the Greater Nanticoke Area School District is related to school director Jeff Kozlowski. Allison Masakowski was hired as the new high school secretary, a 12-month position, during Monday's specially called board meeting. The vote was 5-1. Board President Bob Raineri, board directors Kenny James and Gary Smith attended the meeting and voted in favor of hiring Masakowski. Directors Mark Vandermark and Patty Bieski didn't attend the meeting, but voted in favor of hiring Masakowski when contacted by phone.

Kozlofski, who attended the meeting, abstained from voting for his sister-in-law. He didn't return calls seeking comment.

Board directors Sylvia Mizdail and Tony Prushinski did not attend the meeting.

Masakowski earns \$10.50 an hour as stipulated in the union contract and started her new job on Tuesday, Raineri said. School director Cindy Donlin voted against hiring Masakowski, saying it is against her personal policy to vote for hiring someone if nepotism is involved. She said Masakowski seemed to be very nice, but maintained she would not violate her own policy.

"I won't vote for anyone in any position that is related to someone on the board," Donlin said.

Masakowski was the most qualified applicant for the job, said Raineri and Vandermark.

Vandermark participated in a second round of interviews when Masakowski was one of three applicants seeking the position.

Masakowski's qualifications and prior experience as a secretary at Luzerne County Community College made her stand out from the rest, he said.

"She was working with registering students, so not only did she have the secretarial experience, she worked with young adults. Out of everybody I interviewed she was the best candidate," Vandermark said.

1/27/2009

### **GNA OKs Career Center renovation to save energy**

mguydish@timesleader.com

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board barely mustered a quorum of five members for a 10 a.m. special meeting Monday, and still had to call several absent members to settle one of the two votes held.

The board voted 5-0 to approve a plan by the Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center to borrow \$3.6 million for renovations that would save energy.

The renovations are guaranteed to save the center almost as much in energy, and the center will pay to get the work done.

The center is run and funded jointly by five districts, and boards of all five have been voting on the measure.

The board also voted to hire Allison Masakowski as a 12-month secretary but ran into a snag when Cindy Donlin voted no and Jeff Kozlofski abstained. Superintendent Tony Perrone said several other board members had agreed to vote by phone if needed, so they started calling to see if there were two more yes votes.

Patty Bieski voted yes when reached by phone, as did Frank Vandermark, giving the board the required five votes.

1/26/2009

### **Pieces fall into place for Nanticoke revitalization**

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There's a lot of work going on behind the scenes in preparation for Nanticoke's revitalization.

Luzerne County Community College now is in possession of the Kanjorski Center on East Main Street and has selected a developer for the Culinary Arts Institute. City and state officials, inspired by the college's move downtown, are going ahead with plans to give main thoroughfares a new look and build a recreation park with something for everyone, from students to seniors to skateboarders.

City officials hope to have the first part of the new streetscape ready by the time LCCC finishes transforming the Kanjorski Center into the Health Sciences Center, according to Nanticoke Administrator Holly Quinn.

The college's goal is to open it for classes by fall 2010. That's also the target date to complete building the Culinary Arts Institute a few blocks away, at Market and West Main streets.

Nanticoke officials went through the process approved by the state Department of Transportation to select city engineer Michael A. Pasonick Associates to head the project, Quinn said. Now the city has to advertise for a firm to convert the streetscape designs drawn up by Scranton-based planners Facility Design and Development Ltd. into engineering plans, which will then go to PennDOT for review, she said.

When PennDOT approves the plans, construction will get under way. The city can begin using the \$5.6 million federal transportation grant obtained by U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-Nanticoke, for things like new streetlights, sidewalks and a makeover for Patriot Square.

"We're hoping to start next year," Quinn said. "We can do it in phases, and our first phase is going to be East Main Street around the Kanjorski Center."

The Lower Broadway park will also be constructed in phases, according to Joseph Boylan, chief of staff for state Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke.

The city owns most of the proposed park property on Lower Broadway, which was cleared years ago through a federal flood hazard mitigation program. Attorneys are finalizing the process of legally obtaining the rest of the parcels of land. In the meantime, a committee including Boylan, Yudichak, Quinn, Jim Samselski of Nanticoke's recreation board and Luzerne County Director of Parks Andy Gagaris has been working out the details of creating the park.

Some features they are looking at are a picnic area with a pavilion, walking trails, a BMX bike track and overall beautification of the Lower Broadway area. A top priority is a skate park, to give skateboarders a place of their own to practice the sport.

Lower Broadway Park Committee members James Gidosh and Kevin Pizzano, skateboarders who founded the NEPA Skate Park Alliance, are reviewing skate park designs submitted by representatives of the Joplin, Mo.-based American Ramp Co.

"We'll start out with one piece, get it open, then add to it," Quinn said. "They'll get more as time progresses. Right now, they're deciding what kind of ramp they want first."

Money is the big issue. Plans for the Lower Broadway park were drawn up by the engineering firm of Borton-Lawson in 2005, but things have changed since then, Boylan said.

"We took a step back, said, 'OK, we realize the economic situation today,'" he said. "We would love to do the entire plan from 2005, but we have to do what we can afford."

The park committee is meeting this week to decide exactly what is going into the first phase, and to develop a funding strategy. The park plan will be revised accordingly by the engineers, based on new quotes of what each of the features will cost. Quinn said the committee is applying for grants and state gaming funds, and will also solicit private donations.

"We're taking the right steps here ... almost moving backward so we can move forward," Boylan said.

1/23/3009

**PEL: Nanticoke making strides toward fiscal recovery**

**But Mayor Bushko was hoping for more improvement, money for capital projects.**

Janine Ungvarsky - Times Leader Correspondent

The financial team is pleased with signs of improvement in Nanticoke's fiscal health, but the city's mayor expressed frustration that steps to recovery weren't larger.

"The city is not financially healthy, but the trend is positive," said Gerald Cross, executive director of the Pennsylvania Economy League. The financially distressed city is operating under a recovery plan approved by the state. .

Cross and city financial Director Holly Quinn told Wednesday's council meeting that the city paid \$4,030,924 in bills and ended 2008 with \$183,049, meeting all its financial expenses without incurring additional debt.

"We stood on our own two feet this year," Quinn said.

Quinn and Cross expressed optimism for the direction the city is headed under the plan, but Mayor John Bushko said he was disappointed that in the second year of the recovery plan more money hadn't been generated for capital improvements.

Cross explained the city started the plan in 2006 in poor shape, in part because two-thirds of the city's residential properties each paid \$180 or less in taxes a year. Under the recovery plan, the city increased the earned income tax to 1.5 percent, but there are delays between when the income tax is paid and when it ends up in city coffers, Cross said. As a result, even though the city expected to triple its revenues from the income tax, much of that increase didn't reach the city until the last quarter of 2008, he said.

"We only brought in 61 percent of the (earned income tax) we expected, and we still squeaked by and paid the bills," Cross said. "It's not the best place to be, but it's a heck of a lot better than where you were."

Council members also discussed a plan to allow permit parking for Luzerne County Community College students on Mondays. The parking change would affect the north side of East Main Street from Locust to North Walnut; both sides of Arch Street from North Market to Locust; and additional parking on the North side of Arch Street from Locust to Broadway as posted.

Resident Michael Stachowiak complained about vague wording in the legal ads about the proposed ordinance and raised concerns about the effect of limited parking on area businesses.

"Don't you think it would behoove you to talk to the businesses and see if one of them have some other ideas about this?" Stachowiak asked.

Council approved the first reading of the parking ordinance, and Bushko promised to ask local businesses for input

before the second reading in February.

In other business, council:

- Approved the first reading of a zoning change for a lot at the corner of Washington and Prospect streets to allow construction of a mini-market.
- Addressed concerns from a beauty shop owner on Spring Street about cars parking for long stretches in a posted one-hour zone in front of her shop.
- Discussed notifying the public that the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority has closed its office in the municipal building and no longer has staff available for residents to pay sewer bills.

Although a box is available for payment drop off, City Clerk Mary Cheshinski said city employees are wasting time explaining why they can't accept payments.

1/23/2009

### **Hundreds inquire about LCCC's free tuition program**

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After five years out of a classroom, Gina Kaminski, of Wilkes-Barre, is going back to school to finish the final 12 credits left for her business management degree. She stopped when work became too busy to study, but now that a bankruptcy left her without a job, she has the time to go back to school.

Spurred by the offer of free tuition at Luzerne County Community College, Kaminski and hundreds of other people in Luzerne County have been inquiring and signing up for spring semester classes.

Susan Spry, vice president for workforce development, said her office has received more than 300 phone calls and 300 e-mails since the Employment Retraining Opportunities Program was announced last week.

A team of college employees has been meeting with approximately 50 people a day, and 90 have signed up for between three and 12 tuition-free credits.

"It's just been unbelievable," she said. "At some point in time when we catch our breath we'll have to assess this. We knew there were a lot of folks out there who were looking for training and were unemployed, but no one expected this response."

When the college last offered free tuition to unemployed students in 2002 through a state program, 100 students signed up. More students are poised to sign up for this one semester than all three of those semesters.

On Jan. 13, the board of trustees approved the Employment Retraining Opportunities Program, that allows people who have lost their job during the last year to take up to 12 credits without paying tuition.

While students still have to pay for their books and other fees, they can save up to \$1,200 in tuition. For example, the estimated cost of fees and books for three credits is about \$200, while for 12 credits it is about \$970.

"I think it's great," said potential student Carol Bernosky, who used to work in a factory and has struggled to find a job since August. "It's at least something for this area."

Students come from a variety of backgrounds and education, from people with high school diplomas or GEDs to masters degrees who can't find the jobs they are looking for.

To avoid incurring additional costs, counselors are assigning the students to already existing courses with open seats. However, since the spring semester began on Tuesday and so many people have enrolled because of the Employment Retraining Opportunities Program, academic adviser and counselor Deborah Boyson said many of the classes, especially at entry level, are full or filling up fast.

Counselors are looking to place some students at the Wilkes-Barre Corporate Learning Center, where classes begin Feb. 9 and students signing up now will not have missed class.

Spry said they are trying to get creative in finding courses students are interested in and space in those classes, and are looking into adding courses.

"That's the fence we're on right now," she said. "We are still filling existing classes. We definitely are looking at adding sections, but of course there's additional financial impact for that."

If more classes are added, the board of trustees would need to be involved in the decision because of the additional costs.

The board did not set a limit on the number of students who could enroll through the free-tuition program, but asked for regular updates.

"Once they hear my numbers they might," she said. "I think they'll be as stunned as we are."

Right now, the interest the college is seeing in the program shows just how much need there is locally for additional education and training, Spry said.

“It’s sobering to me,” she said. “It’s very humbling to me to be a part of this.”

The flood of interested students doesn’t look like it will subside soon, as many people have decided that this semester is too soon for them to start classes and are looking at the summer semester.

1/22/2009

### **Administrator says Nanticoke’s in good shape; mayor disagrees**

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Council heard good financial news on Wednesday, and also took a step toward getting more downtown parking for Luzerne County Community College.

At the end of 2008, Nanticoke was in the best financial condition it had been since the city was declared financially distressed by the state three years ago, Fiscal Administrator Holly Quinn told council.

She said there wasn’t money for the capital reserve fund, which is used for things like paving and buying new equipment. But for the first time in many years the city didn’t run a deficit, didn’t need a loan from the state or otherwise add to its long-term debt, and didn’t borrow from the sewer fund or other accounts, Quinn said.

In addition, Nanticoke paid back its tax anticipation loan on time, and didn’t have any seriously overdue bills.

“The city is not financially healthy, but it is not deteriorating financially,” said Gerald Cross, executive director of the city’s financial recovery coordinator, Pennsylvania Economy League. “I think that’s a trend you should find encouraging.”

But Mayor John Bushko doesn’t. He feels the city’s financial recovery plan is flawed, and not enough has been accomplished.

“It’s probably just frustration on my part,” Bushko said. “I thought a lot more would be done, especially with capital improvements.”

In other business, council had a first vote on an ordinance to establish a permit parking program for Luzerne County Community College students who will eventually attend classes downtown.

Last week, college officials formally took over the Kanjorski Center on East Main Street for the health sciences center and announced Moosic-based Mark Development as the developer for the Culinary Arts Institute at Market and Main streets.

Under the ordinance, only permit holders would be able to park on certain streets from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Mondays. These are:

The north side of East Main Street between Locust and North Walnut streets.

Both sides of Arch Street from North Market Street to Locust Street.

More space on the north side of Arch Street from Locust Street to Broadway.

Anyone who parks in those areas without a permit on Mondays would be ticketed and fined \$15.

Resident Mike Stachowiak didn’t think the legal ad for the permit parking ordinance was clear. He asked if downtown business owners were notified, because the regulations could affect them.

Council has to vote on the ordinance at two more meetings, so if anyone has better ideas on how to handle the on-street parking, they have time to let city officials know, Bushko said.

He said the city has more plans to provide additional parking for LCCC.

Resident Theresa Sowa wanted to know if LCCC students would be charged for the permits. Bushko said he didn’t think so because the streets are public.

Also, although students need permits to park at LCCC’s main campus, they don’t have to pay for them, city clerk Betsy Cheshinski said.

1/20/2009

### **Gesecki Starts Strong**

Bill Arsenault - Times Leader

Senior middle distance runner Abby Gesecki (Greater Nanticoke Area) appears set for a big finish to her career running with the Navy women’s track team.

Gesecki had eight top five performances last season and has 12 for her career, competing in the 500 and 800 meter runs. She had the school’s second best time in the 500 indoors in a victory over Army last season in a time of 1:17.90.

In the 800, her best time indoors is 2:23.17. Her best outdoors is 2:16.89.

“Abby is off to a very strong start this indoor season,” Navy coach Carla Criste said. “She is in the most well-

conditioned shape of her career. She returned from the holidays ready to lead our mid-sprinting cadre.”  
Criste feels that Gesecki will earn All-Patriot League honors in the 400 to 800 range events. “She should be an Eastern National contender in the 500,” the coach said. “We are expecting great things from her.”  
The Midshipmen, off to a 10-0 start after a 6-0 sweep of a seven-team meet last weekend in Annapolis, will compete in George Mason’s Patriot Games Saturday, Jan. 31 in Fairfax, Va.

1/17/2009

### **Ambulance personnel will keep jobs in Nanticoke, Newport Twp. merger**

Kristen Gaydos - Citizens' Voice

All Newport Township and Nanticoke ambulance personnel will retain their positions when the two companies merge next month, according to ambulance officials.

A notice circulated Friday indicated ambulance personnel from both municipalities would be terminated Feb. 28 and were invited to submit applications for the newly formed South Valley Regional Ambulance. However, that does not mean positions will be eliminated, officials said.

“It’s a formality,” Janine Floryshak, captain of the Newport Township Ambulance Association, said Friday.

“Everyone is going to retain their job,” she said. “We’re starting fresh.”

All personnel will fill out applications for the regional ambulance company, which will begin service March 1, and will be given new job descriptions, Floryshak said. Both organizations employ salaried personnel.

All that’s left to do in preparation for the merger is finish up paperwork, Floryshak said. She said she believes it’s the best way to ensure quality care for residents.

“It’s the best thing for the people of Newport Township and Nanticoke,” she said.

Officials from the Nanticoke Ambulance Association were not available for comment Friday.

1/17/2009

### **Autopsy report sought in ‘suicide’**

### **Relatives of Nanticoke doctor sue to force release, but widow won’t give her consent.**

tmorgan@timesleader.com

Relatives of a Nanticoke physician whose 2004 death was ruled a suicide have filed a lawsuit seeking to force Luzerne County Coroner John Corcoran to release the autopsy report.

Catherine Adkins-Suraci, the sister of Dr. Robert Thomas Adkins, and four family members filed the suit Thursday in Luzerne County Court.

The suit is the culmination of a several-year battle Adkins-Suraci has waged to secure the release of the autopsy report completed on her brother following his October 2004 death at his Nanticoke home.

Robert Adkins was found dead in his yard of two gunshot wounds to his abdominal area. The late Dr. George Hudock, then county coroner, ruled the death a suicide.

Adkins-Suraci and other family members have questioned that ruling, however, based on what they believe to be inconsistencies in reports of his death.

They sought the autopsy report to clear up those questions, but the coroner’s office has refused to release the document unless Robert’s next of kin, his widow Karen, consents. She has refused to do so.

The lawsuit, filed by attorney J. Timothy Hinton of Scranton, claims Corcoran is violating the coroner’s act by failing to file the autopsy report and other “official records” related to the death with the Luzerne County Prothonotary’s office.

The dispute centers on whether autopsy reports are considered an “official record” under the coroner’s act, which is part of the county code.

Hinton cites several appellate court rulings he says support his contention that the reports are considered part of the official records.

Corcoran said Friday he could not comment because he had just received the suit. He said he would review it with his solicitor and file an appropriate response.

1/16/2009

### **Greater Nanticoke Area parent wants district to provide gifted classes to son**

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Greater Nanticoke Area School District is looking for ways to improve its gifted program and make it more accountable after continued complaints by parents.

Greater Nanticoke Area has not followed through on steps to improve its gifted program, parent Raymond Whittaker said at Thursday night's board meeting, and he wants to know if it will take legal action against the school for his son to get the education the district is required to provide.

In October, Whittaker approached the board and said his third-grade son had attended one gifted class during the first seven weeks of school, instead of going every week like he is supposed to.

The next day, Superintendent Tony Perrone said the district had taken steps to make sure all 35 of its gifted students would be able to attend class every week.

Districts are required to provide additional education services to students with Individualized Education Programs, including gifted students.

While some gifted classes were held following that October meeting, they have stopped taking place regularly, parents at the January board meeting said. Whittaker said his son had one gifted class during December. Promises by program director of more advanced programs, specifically in science and foreign languages, have not materialized, Whittaker said.

"That's nothing but lip service," he said. "I'm being pacified ... Is it going to take a due process hearing to make things better?"

Perrone said Thursday he had placed an order for \$3,000 in robotics, but Whittaker called that "a drop in the bucket." The board held an executive session after the board meeting to discuss the situation.

The district's low scores on the science portion of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment has board members, especially Tony Prushinski, concerned.

He said that the administrators need to do something to improve the program so the district doesn't continue to score last in the county.

Prushinski also said that consultants the district hires need to be held more accountable, and wanted to see any paperwork, conclusions or suggestions from the last two consultants at the district.

Perrone acknowledged rumors that this might be his last year as superintendent at Greater Nanticoke Area, where he has worked for more than 40 years. He could submit a letter of intent to retire as early as next month. He said he was looking at finding a job, possibly working with juvenile offenders, where he would get paid. Perrone has been working for the district with no salary but with health benefits for the last several years. The board will begin the process of looking for a new superintendent when a letter of intent is received.

1/16/2009

**Poor test score concerns upset GNA school director**

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Greater Nanticoke Area School District must work harder to improve standardized test scores, school director Tony Prushinski said Thursday night.

Prushinski presented a study at the school board meeting regarding the district's poor performance on the science portion of the standardized test.

"Everytime we have a PSSA given, Nanticoke is last. I am tired of always coming in last," said Prushinski, who is a teacher himself in another school district.

The PSSA is given to students in grades fourth, eighth and 11th to test their math, reading and science skills.

Superintendent Tony Perrone said the district never knows exactly what the students will be tested on in each subject, but the teachers try to follow the state's curriculum guidelines.

Prushinski commended the district's teachers, saying they were the best, but demanded to know why the district hasn't found a way to improve test scores.

He said administrators at each school need to determine what programs will work best to help students achieve better test scores. He questioned why the district hired a group of consultants last year to advise Nanticoke on its educational program.

Specifically, Prushinski asked whether those consultants gave the school administrators and teachers feedback or recommendations on how they can improve their teaching abilities to help students.

One teacher in the crowd said she received a book she would pass on to Prushinski.

The district overall improved slightly in its standardized testing last year, but when the 11th grade students did so poorly on the science portion, that brought the entire district's rating down.

“At least we are moving in the right direction,” school director Patty Bieski said.

In other business, Perrone announced the district will be opening two hours late today due to the extreme cold and wind chill issues.

The board of school directors also accepted several teacher retirement requests: Teachers Phyllis Rutchauskas, Philip Levandoski, Donna Greytok and Richard Timko plan to retire at the end of this school year. Teacher Mayr Jo Hynes plans to retire on July 5. Teachers Margaret Johnson, Kathleen Kalie, Deborah Malia, Thomas Pierontoni, Charlene Harwood and Charlotte Antolik plan to retire in June 2010

1/15/2009

### **Jobless can study for free at LCCC**

**Those who have lost their jobs due to economy can take 12 credit hours at no charge.**

slong@timesleader.com

People who've lost their job within the last year because of a souring economy can take up to 12 credit hours of classes for free at Luzerne County Community College.

The one-time credit waiver is a \$1,200 value being coordinated by LCCC's Workforce Development Office. The program was approved by LCCC's Board of Trustees on Tuesday.

Trustees will receive periodic updates from LCCC President Tom Leary on the number of students participating and the program's effect on the college's finances.

Any person collecting unemployment who lost a job due to no fault of his or her own and living within the college's coverage area is eligible to participate, said Sue Spry, vice president of Workforce and Community Development.

LCCC serves students as far north as Susquehanna County and far south as Northumberland County.

Leary said the college will continue to offer this program as long as it can, but will not put the college in a precarious financial position.

He added the college also has an obligation to help people improve their employment status by retraining them to seek new employment so they can continue to provide for themselves and their families.

“The humanitarian concern outweighs the financial concern. The shock and burden of losing a job can be devastating, not only to the individual, but also to their families,” Leary said.

Students must still pay for their textbooks and additional fees and will be encouraged to apply for financial aid.

Spry said her office has received numerous calls from people who've been laid off or anticipate they soon will be seeking information about training problems.

“They know in order to be marketable they will have to enhance the skills they already have or look in a new direction,” Spry said.

Potential students can take advantage of this program this semester. Classes start on Tuesday, but students participating in this program have until the end of next week to start classes, Leary said.

The college offered a similar program after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks when unemployment rates soared. About 100 people took advantage of the college's employment retraining opportunities.

To learn more

To learn more about the program, contact the Workforce and Community Development Office

Attn: Sue Spry in Advanced Technology Center

Phone: 740-0480 E-mail: [sspry@luzerne.edu](mailto:sspry@luzerne.edu)

[www.luzerne.edu](http://www.luzerne.edu)

1/15/2009

### **Yudichak: LCCC, Nanticoke partnership great for city's future**

**Lease of Kanjorski Center and institute construction likely to bring downtown jobs.**

slong@timesleader.com

Luzerne County Community College's move into downtown Nanticoke signals a \$25 million revitalization effort in the city and dreams coming true for state Rep. John Yudichak and city leaders.

College trustees approved an agreement to lease the Kanjorski Center for seven years at \$289,000 a year and will purchase the Culinary Arts Institute for \$3.1 million after it is constructed. Another \$4.5 million in state grant money will be used to pay the remaining cost of constructing the approximately 22,000-square-foot building at the corner of Main and Market streets.



LCCC President Tom Leary and Board of Trustees Chairman Paul Halesy signed the lease Tuesday on behalf of the college.

Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, has been working to stimulate Nanticoke's downtown for several years and believes relocating the college's Health Sciences Program and Culinary Arts Institute will bring 200 jobs and 300 students into the downtown.

"You often hear about proposals, plans and projections. This is tangible results that the people of the greater South Valley area will be able to reach out and touch. They will see the transformation of downtown Nanticoke," Yudichak said.

Leary hopes the facilities will be ready for students to begin attending classes in the fall of 2010.

Businesses will be attracted to the area once the educational programs are relocated, Yudichak said.

"The partnership between LCCC and Nanticoke lays the foundation for the long-term sustainable development of the South Valley community," he said.

Nanticoke Mayor John Bushko was ecstatic that the city's redevelopment had finally begun. The Culinary Arts Institute and Health Sciences Program relocation is a move in the right direction for the city, which in recent years has suffered economically.

"This is a big day for Nanticoke. We are going to grow," he said.

1/14/2009

### **LCCC's health sciences, culinary arts center projects begin**

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Tuesday marked the official start of downtown Nanticoke revitalization through the expansion of two of Luzerne County Community College's most popular programs.

Nanticoke General Municipal Authority Chairman Ron Kamowski and city Mayor John Bushko signed over the Kanjorski Center on East Main Street to LCCC President Thomas P. Leary and Board of Trustees Chairman Paul Halesy. The deal, which has been in the works for more than two years, will allow the college to relocate and grow its health sciences center.

Moments after they put their pens down, the college's board of trustees voted 8-3 to select Scranton-based Mark Development to construct an approximately \$7.5 million, 20,000-square-foot Culinary Arts Institute at Market and Main streets.

"Do you realize what a home run this is? Two different projects for downtown Nanticoke in the same night," municipal authority solicitor Joseph Lach said.

The projects, slated for completion in fall 2010, represent a \$25 million total revitalization effort that will bring more than 450 LCCC students, faculty and staff into the city, state Rep. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, said after the board meeting.

"This is just the beginning," Yudichak said. "This is the catalyst to attract more businesses downtown."

Asked how he felt about receiving the contract for the Culinary Arts Institute, William Rinaldi, the principal of Mark Development, said he intends to "get to work, and put people to work — local people. That's our job."

Two other developers had also expressed interest in the project. Some board members, including Dr. Mahmoud Fahmy, said they chose Mark Development because they liked the idea of using a firm from the area. Educational Property Group is based in Exton and Paragon Building Services Inc. is headquartered in Maryland, although its principal, Joe Sinkaus, is a Scranton native.

"Frankly, I trusted Mark Development more. That was the reason for my vote," board member Dr. Thomas O'Donnell said.

Board member Elaine Cook, who with Elaine Curry and Michael Tigue voted against hiring Mark Development, said she did so because the motion was not specific about the terms and conditions.

The board voted unanimously to pass a resolution by Fahmy to create a committee to oversee and monitor construction of the Culinary Arts Institute. The building will be built on a site occupied by the city-owned senior center and the former Susquehanna Coal Co. office.

The plan is for the developer to front the money for the building. There is \$4.7 million in state grants available for the project, and the college will reimburse the approximately \$3 million remaining, to own it outright.

As for the Kanjorski Center, the municipal authority will lease the 42,000-square-foot, three-story commercial building to LCCC for \$2.029 million — \$289,858 a year or \$24,155 a month — for seven years. After that, a federal grant used to construct the building expires, and the college can buy it for a token payment of \$1, Kamowski said.

The Kanjorski Center will take about 14 to 16 months to renovate for the health sciences center, and Leary estimates the total project cost will be about \$10 million.

The municipal authority has been trying to find a use for the office building, which was mostly vacant since its main tenant, Medicare claims processing firm HealthNow, moved out in October 2005.

“This is a day we’ve been looking forward to,” authority member Hank Marks said Tuesday.

1/14/2009

### **LCCC inks Kanjorski Center deal**

slong@timesleader.com

The redevelopment of Nanticoke took one large step forward Tuesday night during a Luzerne County Community College Board of Trustees meeting.

LCCC, now with the keys to the Kanjorski Center, decided to purchase instead of lease the Culinary Arts Institute building, hired a developer to construct the institute and approved a new construction management agreement with Precept Associates.

After years of planning, discussion and negotiating, board members signed a seven-year lease agreement with Nanticoke General Municipal Authority for the Kanjorski Center.

The college’s Health Sciences Program will move into the 42,000-square-foot, three-story building on East Main Street after renovations are completed.

LCCC President Tom Leary hopes students will be in the space by fall 2010. The college is leasing the building for \$280,000 a year and has an option to purchase it at the end of the seven-year lease.

“The new Health Sciences Center will provide the college with the opportunity to update its educational facilities for the health sciences programs that prepare students for high priority, high demand careers in healthcare,” said Dana Clark, LCCC’s provost and vice president of academic affairs.

In a 9-to-3 vote, the board hired Mark Construction Services, Inc., owned by William Rinaldi, to build the Culinary Arts Institute for \$7.6 million -- \$4.5 million in grants and \$3.1 million from college funds.

Board Chairman Paul Halsey, Vice Chairman Greg Skrepenak, board members John Kashatus, August Piazza, Lynn Marie Distasio, Mahmoud Fahmy, Tom Pizano, Joseph Rymar and Tom O’Donnell voted to hire the developer.

Distasio voted yes on the condition the developer use local union workers during construction.

O’Donnell said he voted yes after considering the paperwork from the finance committee, making his own judgment and following his intuitive feeling from the presentations,

He said he now trusts the finance committee’s recommendations because new policies have been added to ensure all contracts are thoroughly reviewed.

Last year the college’s contract with its construct manager, Precept Associates, came under scrutiny.

Board members Michael Tigue, Elaine Cook and board secretary Elaine Curry voted against hiring Mark Construction Services as the developer.

“The reason I voted no is that I was personally not satisfied with a project he completed in the Hazleton area. Also I was not convinced that Mark Construction had the best proposal regarding the LCCC project being green or eco-friendly,” Curry said.

She noted since Rinaldi’s company received a majority of the board’s support, she anticipated the firm would do a good job.

Three board members were not present at the meeting and did not vote – J. Toure McCluskey, Joseph Lombardo and Agapito Lopez.

Fahmy requested that a committee be created to oversee the construction of the Culinary Arts Institute.

“With any type of project there should be some type of overseer. Before any kind of a problem festers we would like very much to know about it and we can solve the problem,” Fahmy said. His motion was approved.

College trustees approved a new construction management contract with Precept Associates. The firm will be paid 4.98 percent of project costs instead of 8 percent.

Precept will oversee the construction of the second phase of the Public Safety Training Institute and the Health Sciences Center. Precept also will complete its work on the first phase of the Public Safety Training Institute.

The settlement reached with Precept does not provide the college any refund, but voids out the first contract and approves this new contract, board solicitor Joe Kluger said.

BEAT REPORTS:

## **Happy holiday**

Erin Moody, staff writer, covers area schools. You can reach her at [emoody@citizensvoice.com](mailto:emoody@citizensvoice.com) or 570-821-2051.

Greater Nanticoke Area's drive to collect money and toys to help local families and children this holiday season was a great success, Superintendent Tony Perrone said, with at least \$6,500 raised and "loads and loads of toys" donated. The money was used to buy food certificates and additional toys.

The district was able to give two toys each to 144 children living in the district, including younger siblings of Greater Nanticoke Area students. That way, the older children weren't the only ones getting presents, he said. About 200 families benefitted from the money raised.

The bulk of the money came from teachers who paid \$15 to participate in dress-down days at work, he said. Additional money left over after the drive was used to help provide dress-code appropriate clothing for families who could not afford to meet the new requirements, Perrone said.

1/10/2009

## **GNA family mourns junior honors student**

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Several friends of Erin Schultz worried as they waited and waited for her to show up at school Friday morning. She never arrived, and their fears were soon realized.

The dreaded news that the junior honors student had died in a crash on her way to school spread around Greater Nanticoke Area High School.

The 16-year-old lost control of her 1992 Mercury Tracer on Lily Lake Road in Slocum Township around 7:10 a.m. and the vehicle slammed head-on into a large tree stump off the roadway, state police at Shickshinny said.

Schultz, of Lake Road, Lily Lake, was rushed to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Plains Township, where she was pronounced dead on arrival, police said.

"I don't even know what to say. I've known her since kindergarten," said Kati Walp, 16, a fellow junior from Pond Hill. "We were like best friends since we were little. I don't think I ever got in a fight with her. She would do anything for anybody."

Schultz was a member of the National Honor Society, but also excelled out of the classroom. She was well known for her role in the school's chorus program and the marching band.

In an online profile on Facebook.com, she lists "music, music, music" among her favorite activities. She was a big fan of Elvis Presley.

"She was amazing at playing the trumpet. She was amazing at drawing cartoons. She was just a great friend. It's horrible losing someone like this," Walp said, choking up during a brief phone call.

Grief counselors spent the day at the high school. Extra-curricular activities at night were canceled.

"She was a good kid, an all-American kid," said Greater Nanticoke Area Superintendent Anthony Perrone.

Schultz worked at Blue Ridge Pizza Shop in Slocum Township and attended First United Methodist Church in Shickshinny.

School librarian Xann Pray, Schultz's National Honor Society advisor, described the teenager as "a sweet girl, a funny girl."

"She had a way about her that made people happy to be with her. I will always remember her for her great attitude and the smile on her face," Pray said.

Walp said Schultz rarely drove herself to school — she usually took the bus or got a ride.

An issue compounding Walp's grief is that she and another close friend, Allie Schraeder, actually drove past the accident on the way to school.

They saw emergency crews surrounding the scene, not knowing it was their best friend in the car.

"Me and Allie were sitting here all day trying to figure it out," Walp said.

Laura Boone, staff writer, contributed to this report.

1/9/2009

## **Firm to inspect Nanticoke bridges**

## **Resident brought two bridges' deteriorating conditions to city council's attention.**

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Ceco Associates of Scranton, a civil engineering firm, was hired Wednesday night by Nanticoke City Council to inspect the North Market Street and Access Road bridges to determine if the structures need to be replaced or repaired.

The city is paying \$3,100 for both inspections.

If the firm only inspected one of the bridges the city would pay \$1,500.

The North Market Street Bridge is at least 90 years old and it's unknown how long the Access Road bridge has been in operation, Councilman Joe Dougherty said.

Resident Mike Stachovak brought the bridges' deteriorating condition to the council's attention during a previous meeting.

He expressed concern that if one of the bridges collapses when someone is driving on it the city could be held financially responsible, and he didn't want to see anyone get hurt.

Mayor John Bushko said he was waiting on the engineer's report before proceeding. The roads are in bad shape, he said, but added he wasn't scared to drive over the bridges.

"I don't know what it needs. It might not need anything. The only thing is it doesn't look good. That's basically what I think the problem is," he said.

The city's engineer Daryl Pawlush of Pasonick Engineering said Ceco Associates is certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to do the inspection and as such, is eligible to receive grant funding if it is determined the bridges do need work.

Pawlush couldn't inspect the structures because he is not a structural engineer.

City officials learned last year the city received more than \$900,000 in revenue from trash and code enforcement fees – \$808,827 in for refuse collections and an additional \$130,048 in code enforcement fees for various types of permits, Dougherty said.

1/9/2009

### **GNA seniors help holiday wishes come true for area children**

Nanticoke Area Notes

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Christmas was a little brighter for children in the Nanticoke area, thanks to two Greater Nanticoke Area seniors who decided to help others as part of their senior project.

Mack Martin and Ian Bukowski worked with volunteers at Mary's Closet to provide toys to children in Luzerne County communities. Mary's Closet is a free clothing ministry run by Holy Child, Holy Trinity, St. Mary of Czestochowa and St. Stanislaus parish community. The main purpose is to provide clothing for men, women and children who have fallen on hard times.

A senior project is a requirement for graduation in the Nanticoke School District. Stuart Tripler, principal at GNA High School, encourages students to select a project which is both challenging and meaningful to them.

Mack and Ian took his advice.

"We wanted to pick a service oriented project that would help people in our community," said Mack. "We didn't want to do just anything for the sake of getting it done."

After talking with their senior adviser, they decided to call their pastor, the Rev. Jim Nash.

"Father Nash was very excited when we talked with him. He told us they were thinking of how to provide toys for children," Ian said. "His enthusiasm really made us decide this was something we wanted to do."

The boys collected toys and monetary donations in the churches for two weekends and after every Mass. More than \$400 in monetary donations was collected and another 100 toys filled their collection bags in the back of the church.

"We went shopping and bought a lot of neat toys with the money we received," said Mack. Action figures, books, and sports items were just some of the toys they picked.

"The generosity of people really surprised me," added Ian. "It was great to see so many people willing to help others."

Debbie Jeffries is one of the coordinators at Mary's Closet. She saw first-hand how this project made a difference.

"Parents were very emotional and grateful when they came to pick the toys up for their children. It meant a lot to them knowing someone cared to do this for them," she explained.

Mary's Closet is not the only place that benefited from the toy drive. Toys were also donated to Nanticoke Head Start, The McCauley House, kindergarten students in Ashley and to children who attended Breakfast with Santa at Pope John Paul II School cafeteria.

"This community really came together and helped these students have a successful project. We are so grateful that Ian and Mack thought of children in the community," said Jeffries.

Mary's Closet is on South Hanover Street in Nanticoke in the former Pope John Paul II School building. It is open to the public Wednesdays from 9 to 11 a.m. Donations can be dropped off Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon and Wednesdays from 9 to 11 a.m. and 6:30 to 8 p.m. For more information, call Debbie at 735-6050 or the parish office at 735-4833 St. Joseph bingo

St. Joseph's Church will hold its monthly bingo Sunday in the church parlors on East Noble Street. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. Early birds are at 1:45 p.m, and regular games start at 2. Cash prizes and door prizes will be awarded. Refreshments will be available for purchase. Everyone is invited to participate.

1/7/2009

### **GNA dress code receives mixed reviews**

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With a few exceptions, students are ditching the jeans and T-shirts at Greater Nanticoke Area schools and trading them in for slacks and collared shirts.

According to Superintendent Tony Perrone, the new dress code that went into effect Monday has been a success — so far. While some students and their parents agree with the stricter code, others remain opposed.

According to parents, all students were checked as they came into school Monday morning, and pulled aside if they were not dressed according to code. Perrone said approximately 20 students were in violation.

Those students were placed into a separate classroom for an in-school suspension until their parents or someone else was able to bring appropriate attire. At the end of school Monday, four students had not been able to get appropriate clothes, Perrone said.

There were no problems at the high school Tuesday, Perrone said, but he was unsure about the lower grades.

"I'm so proud of them," he said. "They looked so good yesterday coming to school."

While the new dress code is more relaxed than other school districts' recently updated codes, clothing such as jeans, collarless shirts, hooded sweatshirts and cargo pants are not allowed.

Many students leaving school Tuesday afternoon sported hooded sweatshirts, showing that they aren't giving up favorite clothing items.

"I know some people are upset about it because it started halfway through the school year, but I think it's a good thing," parent Stacie Panagakos said.

With five kids in school, she was at first worried about scrambling to get clothing. But Panagakos said she shopped early and didn't have much trouble. The dress code has made getting ready easier in the morning, she said, because even though her kids are usually good about wearing proper clothing, they now know what they can and can't wear.

"I told my kids, rules are rules," Panagakos said. "There are things in my life that I'm not necessarily crazy about, but you follow the rules."

One junior, Kayla Bernstein, left school Tuesday with her polo shirt tucked into her purse. She said she'd taken it off as soon as school was over. Bernstein and her friend Bonnie Banaszek said the new code was "stupid" and they would rather be wearing jeans, T-shirts and hoodies. Both said they got new school clothes instead of other gifts for Christmas.

"They said it's going to stop people from making fun of each other, and it's not," Banaszek said.

Students will just find other reasons to pick on each other, she said.

Aware that not all families in the Greater Nanticoke Area School District could afford new clothes, Perrone said the district used some of the money leftover from fundraising for Christmas presents to buy clothing to give away. They are also working on setting up something similar to a school store where parents who can't afford new clothes could come and get a few shirts or pairs of pants for free.

1/6/2009

### **Local gymnast excelling at West Virginia**

Bill Arsenault - Times Leader

West Virginia University women's gymnastic coach Linda Burdette is looking for big things from sophomore Amy Bieski this season.

Bieski, from Nanticoke (Northeast Gymnastics), had an outstanding freshman season with the Mountaineers. Five times during the season she was named East Atlantic Gymnastics League Rookie of the Week. She also gained EAGL Performer of the Week once.

"Amy had an outstanding freshman season and I'm sure that will carry over into her sophomore season," Burdette said.

“The experience she gained should give her that much more confidence.”

Bieski’s best last season were 9.9 in floor exercise, 9.825 on bars, 9.775 on beam, 9.25 on vault. Her best in all-around score was 39.275.

“Amy is extremely hard working, focused and committed to perfection and she has done everything we have asked of her in the preseason,” Burdette said. “So we are looking for her to be a big contributor to the team’s success this season.”

The Mountaineers have a big test in their opener. They face four-time NCAA Champion Georgia Friday in Athens, Ga.

1/5/2009

BEAT REPORTS:

**Greater Nanticoke Area’s new dress code begins today**

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A reminder for Greater Nanticoke Area students and parents — the new dress code is in effect, as of today. While the general guidelines instruct students to wear a collared shirt with well-fitting pants that aren’t jeans, details are available on the district Web site, [www.gnasd.com](http://www.gnasd.com).

With the cold weather we are expecting this week, remember hoodies are not allowed and coats can’t be worn inside during school hours.

If a student does come to school in something that violates the code, Greater Nanticoke Area typically pulls the inappropriately dressed student out of class and calls his or her parents to bring a change of clothing.