

12/10/2017

Story does not define the great people of Nanticoke

Citizens Voice - Letter to the Editor / Published: December 10, 2017

This is how Nanticoke was described in a recent PennLive story about the opioid addiction problem facing towns large and small across our nation: "If you were to knock on people's doors here, you will get all old people and addicts. That's it. That's what you get." Obviously, the reporters didn't knock on too many doors in our community.

If they would have knocked on an East Union Street door, they would have met a physician who developed a way to feed patients without having to go through their digestive systems. His technology has saved literally millions of lives. If they ventured over to West Ridge Street to knock on doors, they would have met the family of a recent high school graduate currently enrolled in the United States Military Academy at West Point.

They could have knocked on the Slope Street door of our mayor, who is currently battling an aggressive acute myeloid leukemia. He would have told them of the hundreds upon hundreds of Nanticokians who have supported him and given him hope during his ordeal.

They were welcome to knock on the Center Street door at the House of Rhone on Thanksgiving morning, where they would have been welcomed with open arms to help prepare and deliver hundreds of meals to the less fortunate in our town and surrounding communities. There, they would have been joined by professionals, blue collar workers, retirees and students of all ages volunteering to better our area.

I would have ushered them to a South Walnut Street home where they could have met a family who is near single-handedly working to reform prison safety so that our corrections officers can return home safely after protecting our communities.

They could have knocked on an East Main Street door where they would have met students training in a state-of-the-art medical facility so they could later provide dental, emergency medical service, surgical and respiratory care for people throughout our region.

If they would have spent any time in Nanticoke, the doors they approached would have been answered by police officers, loving families, doctors, lawyers, veterans, school teachers, community activists, fellow reporters, students, corrections officers, public servants, doting grandparents and so much more than the "old" and "addicts."

I do not deny that Nanticoke, like virtually every other city its size, is experiencing a problem with drug use. But that does not define our community. We are working to help those addicted and educate those who are not. I am confident the great people of Nanticoke will persevere through this crisis and our city will remain a great place to live, work and raise a family.

11/26/2017

Nanticoke mayor battling leukemia

bwellock@citizensvoice.com

Nanticoke mayor Rich Wiaterowski spends most Thanksgivings smoking a turkey to prepare the traditional meal for his family.

This year was different.

A few days before a recent hunting trip with his son, Wiaterowski was dealing with fatigue and a headache. The trip didn't help.

"(That) Monday came, he was home. He woke up and he really woke up feeling terrible," said his wife, Wendy Wiaterowski.

"His bones were very achy, to the point where when he would shower and he'd have to lay back down, he almost felt like a heartbeat in his bones," she said.

He went to a doctor for blood work. When the doctor called to say he was coming over to discuss the results, Wendy knew something was bad.

Rich Wiaterowski went to Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, and on Monday, he got his diagnosis. He had acute myeloid leukemia, a blood and bone cancer. He started chemotherapy that day.

It wasn't what his wife expected. Nine years ago, Rich Wiaterowski was diagnosed with testicular cancer, but Wendy was worried about a much less serious medical issue.

"I thought we were going to get in trouble because he didn't get his flu shot yet and they were going to diagnose him with the flu. When you're a recovering cancer patient, they require you to get that flu shot every year," Wendy Wiaterowski said. "He kept on saying 'I have to go get my flu shot. I have to go this weekend.' I thought, ah, he's going

to end up with the flu; the doctors' going to be yelling at him because he didn't go. I never, never in a million years, thought we'd be getting a diagnosis of leukemia, by any means."

This past Monday was day one in the treatment calendar. On day 14, a test will give an update on his condition.

The care has been excellent, Rich Wiaterowski said.

"There have been side effects with other patients, but I have not received any," he said. "It's been nothing but feeling better now than I have over past three months."

The goal of treatment is to destroy cancerous cells so he can receive a stem cell transplant.

Chemotherapy drugs can damage bone marrow, where new blood cells are formed, which can lead to dangerous infections, bleeding and other problems, according to the American Cancer Society. A stem cell transplant allows doctors to give higher doses of chemotherapy.

His sisters are promising candidates for a match for a transplant. There is also a national registry, the National Marrow Donor Program, with millions more potential matches.

Rich Wiaterowski has been posting about the experience on Facebook, and support has poured in.

"The prayers, the thoughts, the love, everything is just overwhelming," said Wendy Wiaterowski. "People are just generous. They're just very caring. You really realize how many people you have on your side when going through something like this."

Wiaterowski is a sociable guy. He is a big supporter of the Greater Nanticoke Area Trojans basketball program, and he shakes hands and chats with dozens of people at games.

But doctor's orders may change that this season, although Wiaterowski still hopes to attend games. Shaking hands, hugging and other activities that could cause a risk to his weakened immune system must wait until several months after his stem cell transplant. And for the first time in more than three decades, he won't be hunting for deer season.

His immediate goal now is to get through the weekend without catching a fever so doctors can clear him to go home and continue treatment there.

On Friday, he got his wish. In a post to Facebook, Wiaterowski said doctors told him he was doing so well with his treatment, they were sending him home.

"I don't care if I have to be three feet from someone and not shake hands, at least I can see them and be home," he said. And then on Monday, even though he won't be in the woods, he wants to help his son get ready for deer season's opening day.

11/14/2017

Nanticoke couple opens the first distillery in Luzerne County

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

Jonathan and Maryann Lang recently opened Lang Beverage Co. in a former garage at 128 Lee Mine St. and the flagship product they make and sell is vodka called "220 Shine."

It took several months of construction, applications and inspections before Lang Beverage Co. finally opened in the small garage, where they showed a still they use to make the vodka.

Jonathan Lang said they have ideas for other products but now they are just selling 220 Shine, a name associated with the nostalgia induced by stories of moonshiners who risked fines and prison time to make and sell liquor.

"We wanted to start out with something very simple and there's nothing more simple than just a straight vodka," Lang said. "It's very clean and crisp. People say it has a sweet taste."

Making and selling vodka became legal in the state in 2012 when the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board began allowing limited distillery licenses.

Lang said their limited distillery license is unique because they are not restricted to selling in state liquor stores.

"It put distilleries on the same footing as a winery," Lang said.

There are only two active limited distillery licenses in Luzerne County and 76 statewide, said spokesman Shawn Kelly.

Licensed distillers can make up to 100,000 gallons a year and sell direct or online.

In addition to Lang Beverage, Nick Rosati of Moosic plans to open another distillery called Miner's Mill in a century-old historic building at 93 Miller St. in Wilkes-Barre that was part of the Miner-Hillard Milling Company.

Rosati said he plans to make and sell rum, gin and whiskey and hopes to open in the spring of next year.

His grandfather was a moonshiner decades ago and he said, "I thought it would be neat to do it myself."

He found the building so interesting and wanted to do something to save it so he decided to open a distillery.

In addition to selling rum, gin and whiskey, Rosati said he also will be permitted to sell wine and beer on the premises as long as it's made in Pennsylvania.

Lang said he looks forward to another distillery opening in Luzerne County.

"We need more of us," he said. "I'd love to see it. It seems to be a trend throughout the state right now."

The Langs recently began selling 220 Shine for \$27 a bottle and samples for \$3 on Saturdays from noon to 7 p.m. at the Nanticoke garage. They also will be open Sunday, Nov. 28, from noon to 7 p.m. Additional hours can be made by appointment by calling 570-592-5937 or 570-606-9815.

They have been talking to area bars about selling their vodka and they also hope to sell it at fairs, festivals and farmers markets.

"There's a lot of interest in it but there's nothing out there on the shelves quite yet," Lang said. "It's getting a great reception. The flavor is good. We had a lot of good feedback on it. It should be a hit."

Jonathan Lang works as an electrical inspector and his wife works for a retail furniture company. They said it was a dream come true for both of them to open their own distillery.

"I still work as an electrical inspector part-time until I can make this pay for the rest of my bills," Lang said.

He said he came up with the idea after researching how to make beer, wine and spirits.

"I got into making beer and my wife liked making wine. We got together and we hatched a dream of doing this," he said. "Eight to 10 years later, we finally made it to this point."

Maryann Lang said in the future, they hope to expand into a larger location and open a tasting room.

"I love to have people coming in and buying a bottle but I'd love to have that sense of community where people can stay and have a drink," she said.

For more information about Lang Beverage Co. or to order online, go to their website at langbeverage.org.

10/31/2017

Science writer and Nanticoke native grateful for early detection

mbiebel@timesleader.com

Nanticoke native and science writer Ann Jenkins, who is grateful that her breast cancer was found at an early stage, urges women not to postpone their mammograms.

Science writer and Nanticoke native Ann Jenkins has a message for women.

"Please get your mammogram," she said in a telephone interview from Maryland, where she lives and works. "Mine saved my life."

Jenkins, 52, had surgery for breast cancer last month and will follow up with radiation and hormone therapy.

"The prognosis is good, because it was found early," she said, adding she is grateful for the technology that made it possible for her stage 0 cancer to be found before it had even spread to her lymph nodes.

Jenkins has been a fan of technology, especially the space program, since childhood, and says she has a scar on her chin to prove it.

"When I was 5 years old, in 1970, during the heat of the 'space race,' Apollo 13 was in orbit, and it looked like it wasn't going to get home safely. I was waiting for the capsule to splash down, and there was a long communications blackout while it was reentering the atmosphere. I was sure they were dead.

"Finally, the capsule came hurtling through the sky and splashed down safely in the ocean."

Little Ann jumped up in excitement, slipped on a throw rug and cut her chin, which started bleeding onto the floor. She needed stitches, and eventually received six, but insisted on watching more of the news report first.

"I wanted to wait until they popped the hatch before I went to the hospital," she said.

Jenkins wanted to be an astronaut herself until she realized, somewhere in her early teens, that she had more talent for writing than for physics and math. After studying mass communications and English at King's College, she earned a master's degree in journalism with concentrations in sociology and public relations from the University of Maryland. In 1988, she started working at NASA-Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, where she became a full-time writer on the Hubble project in January 1994.

That job led to an unusual coincidence.

At the time, technology that was developed for the Hubble space telescope to probe deep space led to technology that could probe the depths of the human breast. Jenkins wrote a press release about how women who underwent stereotactic biopsies with low-radiation mammograms to pinpoint a suspicious location in a breast would go home with just a nick in their skin instead of invasive surgery.

Working on a video to follow-up the press release, she went to the University of Maryland Hospital, one of the few places that had the equipment, "and they said, 'Too bad we don't have a 'patient'" to demonstrate the use of the machine. "I said 'I can be the patient,' " Jenkins said, explaining how she went through the motions of having a stereotactic breast

biopsy.

"They put the needle up to my breast but didn't puncture me and I thought, 'Oh, God, I hope I never need this.' Now all these years later, I'm actually benefiting from this."

Jenkins would have gone home to recover from the little nick if the suspicious area had been benign, but it did show signs of cancer - stage 0 cancer, but cancer nonetheless. So she had further surgery and scheduled radiation treatments. It was helpful to return to work nine days after her surgery, said Jenkins, who is still writing about the Hubble space telescope, now as a senior science writer at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore. "I love my job," she said. Though she felt tired physically, she explained, "Emotionally, it's good to get back into the swing of things." Her emotions have run a gamut over the past few weeks, she said.

"At first I didn't believe it. Then I was angry. Then I was resolute. I've got to tell people about early detection."

Mostly, Jenkins feels grateful that her routine mammogram found the cancer.

"It was so small and deep, it would not have been found in a self-exam for years," she said. "By then, God knows what it would have become."

10/29/2017

Luzerne County hometowns: In Nanticoke, a cozy cafe from the past and LCCC

mbiebel@timesleader.com

Throughout the year, the Times Leader is looking at life in two dozen Luzerne County communities in a feature called "Hometowns." The series is running in alphabetical order in print and on our website at www.timesleader.com/tag/hometowns. Today: Nanticoke. Next up: Pittston, Nov. 19.

NANTICOKE — At the Bus Stop Cafe on Patriot Square in the center of town, owner Eli Panagakos offers everything from chili with a fried egg on top to pancakes that helper Edie Minnelli describes as "big as a tire."

But on a recent Saturday morning, breakfast regular Jim Cease chose his usual lighter fare.

"I'm an oatmeal guy, to be truthful," said Cease, 74, of Nanticoke, whose morning ritual includes sitting at the counter, reading newspapers and joking with the cook.

"Hey, Eli, how long have I been coming here?" he asked. "Ever since you opened up, right?"

The men banter with each other, offering outrageously long-ago dates 1743 and 1805.

Finally, they agree. It was 1993.

Cease enjoys breakfasts at the cozy cafe, crammed with such nostalgic decor as pictures of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis, because it reminds him of the Nanticoke he knew growing up, the Nanticoke he used to miss when his 35 years of hauling new cars up and down the East Coast took him away for weeks or months at a time.

Coming home to Nanticoke — a small city of 10,189 people — has always been a great feeling, said Cease, who is happy to be retired and grateful that his two sons were able to find jobs in the area. Nowadays he can watch his grandson play baseball both in town and away, which reminds him of when he played the sport himself for the old Harter High School.

"He didn't get it from me," Cease said with a laugh, hinting his grandson is more talented.

Family feeling runs strong in Nanticoke, agreed another regular, Mary Ann Alapick, who came to The Bus Stop Cafe for her usual coffee and toast.

"This is my stomping ground," she said, grinning at waitress Gia Panagakos, who is Eli's daughter. "Here's my girlfriend."

Alapick's mother died when she was very young, and her father, unable to provide child care some 70 years ago, sent his three youngsters to the former St. Stanislaus Orphanage, which had been located just a mile or so from downtown Nanticoke in Newport Township.

"The boys worked the farm," Alapick said. "The girls worked in the kitchen."

But life at "St. Stan's" wasn't all work, she added. "We had our space to play."

Decades after living there as a child, Alapick regularly visits her brother, who is a resident at Guardian Elder Care, an assisted-living facility on the grounds of the former St. Stanislaus.

"It would take 15 minutes" to walk there, Alapick said. But on a recent Saturday morning she opted to wait for a bus, sitting on a bench in front of The Bus Stop Cafe, where the Luzerne County Transportation Authority's No. 14 and No. 15 buses make regular stops.

Panagakos, the cafe owner, wishes those buses ran more frequently.

"They should run later at night," he said, explaining people who can't afford cars often take a bus to work but find there

is no bus to bring them home after their shift. A cab ride eats up too much of their pay, he said, so they give up the job. The unemployment rate in Nanticoke is 6.2 percent, higher than the state rate of 4.8 percent.

“There aren’t many jobs in Nanticoke,” Panagakos said, adding that lots of commuters drive “to Wilkes-Barre, to Hazleton, to Pittston, or further away.”

Local historian and former Nanticoke Police Chief Chester Zaremba echoes that thought.

“It’s becoming a bedroom community,” he said. “Everybody works someplace else and they shop someplace else.”

Actually, you can still find people doing business in Nanticoke, whether they’re making tangy tomato sauce at Nardozzo’s Pizza or a lean, garlic-laced sausage at Tarnowski’s Kielbasi. Both businesses are on East Main Street.

Nanticoke native Jim Kline, who enjoys walking his beagle, Misty, around Patriot Square and nearby streets in the very walkable downtown, said he misses the barber shop, the five-and-dime and Diamond’s Candy — where George Panagakos, Eli’s father, used to make and sell hand-dipped chocolate confections. They all have closed.

But, he said, you can still find “a good place for steaks and other meat” at the Park Market on Broad Street.

And if he needed a birthday cake, he’d go to the Sanitary Bakery on Ridge Street.

“That’s boss,” he said. “And the icing would be whipped cream.”

Then there’s Luzerne County Community College, which brings thousands of students and teachers to its campus for weekday classes and welcomes the public to such special events as last weekend’s 28th annual Alumni Craft Fair.

Not every crafter at the well-attended fair had an LCCC connection, but some of those who did said they are grateful for the school and its programs.

“My son studied architecture here,” said crafter Lynn Sepela, of Wilkes-Barre, who was selling such items as Halloween wreaths and a sign that said, “You say ‘witch’ like it’s a bad thing.”

Her son’s LCCC credits transferred to the New York Institute of Technology, she said, and he now is working as an architect in New York.

Another crafter, Darlene Pearson, of Hunlock Creek, who was selling homemade goats milk soap, said she found it convenient to attend LCCC and prepare for a job as a medical office assistant while she was working as a shoe salesperson in Nanticoke.

Nursing, criminal justice and business are among the most popular majors at the school, which also is a place where children might attend science camp in the summer, adults might take a baking course on a Saturday, or anyone might soak up stories of the past at the annual history conference.

For more activities that can draw a community together, library director Jim Welch suggests people visit the Mill Memorial Library on Nanticoke’s Kosciuszko Street. Recent events have extended beyond pre-school story time to sessions during which families were invited to bring and play their own board games, or get together to build a birdhouse.

The birdhouse event attracted people from well beyond Nanticoke. Some had driven about seven miles from Wilkes-Barre, and others had traveled about 13 miles from Sweet Valley.

That didn’t matter. Everyone was welcome.

Nanticoke is a friendly place, agreed Carol Kastenbaum, who moved from Brooklyn, N.Y., to Trucksville during the 1980s. In the Back Mountain community, she remembers, a neighbor explained to her that she was “an outsider ... because I hadn’t been born and raised here.”

“I looked at her,” Kastenbaum said. “I thought that was so rude.”

Years later, she moved to Nanticoke and began to enjoy playing shuffleboard and bingo or just talking with new friends at the Rose Tucker Center for Active Adults.

“I have fun,” she said, explaining she doesn’t feel like an outsider in Nanticoke.

Retired teacher Doris Merrill, who also visits the center, has a theory about that. She said that when she taught at then-Wilkes College and Penn State, she could always tell which students had come from Nanticoke, because they were so polite.

“They respect people,” she said, crediting parents who “make their kids listen up, or else.”

“It’s a wonderful place to live,” Merrill said, “and a wonderful place to say, ‘I am a Nanticokian.’”

10/24/2017

Email Scam Alert

pahomepage.com

The City of Nanticoke would like to make the residents aware of Hackers that are using some of the City’s employee’s names to make an e-mail look like it is coming from them when it is not. Our IT Staff is on it and reassures us that the

City's server has not been affected in any way. These people are just disguising themselves by using another name. If you are not expecting an e-mail or are not sure if the e-mail is real, please do not open it and call the employee at City Hall to verify if they actually sent you the e-mail that you received. We apologize for any inconvenience. Thank you.

[Watch the news here about the email scam.](#)

10/14/2017

Stuck construction vehicle snarls traffic in Nanticoke

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

A construction vehicle got stuck and snarled traffic heading into the city for hours on Friday, fire officials said. A rock crusher from Kriger Construction trying to get to the end of Kosciusko Street got stuck on the corner of Kosciusko and Main Streets around 3:30 p.m., according to fire department Capt. Mark Boncal.

"The trailer itself got stuck into the road," he said. "The company brought in their huge crane wreckers to assist with getting it freed up."

It took until about 7 p.m. for crews to free the massive vehicle, Boncal said, so Main Street was closed to traffic causing congestion on detour routes like routes 11 and 29.

"It caused a bit of a nightmare for everybody," he said Friday night. "Everything is all opened up now."

9/15/2017

Mullery fears cuts could put Nanticoke project in jeopardy

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

The proposal to turn land next to a former gas plant into a recreation complex may be on hold if suggested cuts to the state budget are passed.

The project site, called the Lower Broadway Recreation Complex, would include a park with athletic fields, a playground, walking trails, a skateboard park and marsh overlook.

The proposal is part of a state program to transform brownfields, which are properties whose development is complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The state Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources created a pilot program to clean up blighted areas like the Nanticoke site.

"Without necessary state funding, it puts our area in a precarious situation because the site needs to be transformed from an industrial blight area to a recreational site that we can all benefit from," Mullery wrote in a press release.

"Environmental projects in my area will suffer greatly if the House Republican fiscal plan is passed. We need to invest in our future landscape development now."

9/9/2017

Technology helping police keep up with new state rule

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

FORTY FORT — The computer screen lit up in red and a beep sounded throughout the police interceptor sport utility vehicle.

Officer Anthony Smith of the Forty Fort police department knew he had just passed a vehicle with an expired registration.

"You can't take a ride through town without this thing going off," Smith said Friday.

Smith pointed to a screen attached to the computer in the police SUV, on which photographs of vehicles popped up in quick succession. Cameras attached to the patrol vehicle took photos of license plates of almost every vehicle Smith drove past.

License plate recognition software, connected to state and national databases, did the rest.

Since PennDOT stopped issuing month/year stickers to place on license plates as of this year, local police departments have been forced to find other ways to determine if a vehicle's registration is current.

Forty Fort is one of three departments in Luzerne County, along with **Nanticoke** and West Hazleton, to settle on a camera-and-software solution, according to borough police Chief Daniel Hunsinger.

Forty Fort has two vehicles equipped with the system, according to Hunsinger, who said he learned about license plate

recognition software at a police chiefs' convention in Erie.

The hardware and software combined cost about \$17,000, Hunsinger said. The first unit was paid for through a Local Share Account state gaming grant, while the police department's operating budget covered the cost of the second system, Hunsinger said.

The system provides useful information for officers on patrol, Smith said.

The old sticker-based system only indicated if a registration was expired, whereas the computer software lets an officer know if a registration is suspended or listed as belonging to a stolen vehicle, he said.

"It lets officers know what they are dealing with," Smith said.

During a 15-minute ride on Friday, the camera took 271 photos of vehicles. The system registered 12 "hits," with one suspended registration and 11 expired registrations.

Borough Mayor Andy Tuzinski credited state Rep. Aaron Kaufer and state Sen. Lisa Baker for supporting Forty Fort's efforts to obtain the state grant and get the system up and running.

9/8/2017

Nanticoke Area fills vacant board seat

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

Mark Cardone became the ninth member of the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board at Thursday's meeting.

Cardone had owned the Pizza Mill restaurant in Kingston for 25 years and is a secondary teacher for the Wilkes-Barre Area School District. He lives in Nanticoke.

The school board appointed Cardone to a vacant board seat. He replaces Ryan Verazin, who resigned from the board last month.

Also at Thursday's meeting, Superintendent Ronald Grevera gave an update on the Kennedy Early Childhood Center building project.

The new school facility is expected to open for the 2018-19 school year for Pre-K through second grade.

Exterior work involving structural steel will take place over the next two months, and interior work will continue during the winter, Grevera said.

On March 28, the school board voted to accept project bids with a total cost of

\$8.8 million. A change order for classroom modifications was expected to increase the cost by \$33,800, but it ended up only costing \$4,382, Grevera said.

9/6/2017

Students lacking shots may be barred from school

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice (Note: Edited for website by Nanticoke webdesign)

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District may have to exclude about 40 percent of high school seniors from attending school Friday because they failed to get meningitis booster shots, Superintendent Ronald Grevera said Monday.

A new state law requires students in grade 12 to have a second vaccination against meningitis by the fifth day of school.

"I am concerned that many students particularly seniors will be missing some time due to the change in the immunization rules," Grevera wrote in an email.

But the new law provides some exemptions. Students can stay in school by submitting medical notes that vaccinations are scheduled, state Department of Health spokeswoman April Hutcheson said. Students who have a religious or medical reason for not getting immunized are also exempt.

About 170 students are typically enrolled in 12th grade at Greater Nanticoke Area.

9/4/2017

Valley with a Heart raises funds for families of sick children 17th annual event raises funds for families of sick childrenZ

By Marcella Kester - For Times Leader

James and Heather Shaw were preparing to start their new lives in Shanghai, China, this past October when the unthinkable happened.

The Swoyersville family was about to leave the country for Heather's new job across the world when one morning something was terribly wrong with their daughter, Joanna.

“We sold our house, got rid of everything we had, donated to the church, moved in with family for a couple weeks, and then with plane ticket in hand, my daughter essentially woke up one day and could not walk,” James said. “No warning, no illness, nothing like that.

“She went from walking around and being a normal kid to I had to pick her up and put her in a wheelchair.”

Joanna was one of three children chosen to be this year’s beneficiaries of Sunday’s 17th annual Valley with a Heart benefit.

Held at the St. Faustina Grove, the benefit has become a large draw to motorcycle enthusiasts and those wishing to better the lives of sick children through a fun-filled day of live entertainment, raffles, food and a scenic motorcycle ride throughout the Wyoming Valley.

After emergency room visits and a plethora of testing, the Shaws were told to immediately travel to Danville to resume testing and treat Joanna. After two weeks in the hospital, the 13-year-old began to walk again, although doctors still aren’t completely sure of what exactly happened, Heather said. Nevertheless, the plan to relocate to China was put on hold, as the family is now working on finding stability locally as they continue to travel for tests.

The organization assisted the Shaws by providing free gas cards to ease travel expenses, and funds from Saturday’s benefit will assist in paying for medical bills for all three families.

Valley With a Heart started in 2000 after a group of concerned friends and motorcycle enthusiasts banded together, creating a benefit to aid the family of Elise Harrison, an 11-year-old cancer patient. The event was a success, and the Valley with a Heart annual benefit was born.

Since then, Valley with A Heart has raised over \$500,000 dollars for seriously ill children and their families.

Rick Temarantz, the organization’s president, said it was easy to decide on the benefit’s name, which is supported through the Luzerne Foundation.

“We decided to put our name with something that’s already recognized within our area, that tells about our community,” he said. “We are not a motorcycle group. We are people that ride that decided to help needy families.”

While Sunday’s weather dealt a blow to the organization’s fundraising efforts and ultimately caused the cancellation of the annual motorcycle ride for safety reasons, Valley With a Heart treasurer Ricky Taddei said he was hopeful that the public would still come to show their support and enjoy other features the benefit offers. At least 15 bands were scheduled to play throughout the daylong event, with dozens of local vendors, food and nearly 70 raffle baskets for public enjoyment.

“Whatever we raise based on the generosity of the people here, that’s what we care about,” he said.

While Joanna was busy volunteering her time in the kitchen, Lisa Mosley sat in a chair with her two and-a-half year-old daughter, Callie, in her lap. Surrounded by family members all donning matching pink tee shirts, the Bear Creek resident shared her daughter’s story, and what the organization and local community means to them.

Mosley has taken care of Callie since she was 4 weeks old, formally adopting her last year. She has undergone multiple surgeries, just having heart surgery a mere 10 days ago.

“We knew something was wrong, but we didn’t know what was wrong,” she said of when she first took Callie in.

When Callie turned 7 months old, the family discovered that Callie has a chromosomal problem, and is missing an X chromosome and 157 genes, she said. Callie also suffers from Cerebral Palsy, sensory disorder and more. Callie cannot walk or talk. She uses a variety of machines, including oxygen and a feeding tube. However Mosley says she is a very strong and happy girl, which was abundantly clear as she bopped around in her mother’s lap, interested in what she saw around her.

Mosley said she first heard about Valley with a Heart through a friend in December and decided to put in an application for gas assistance, as Callie goes to Hershey for treatment up to 4 times per week. The organization responded to her call for help, later offering to make Callie one of the event’s beneficiaries.

“It was a huge surprise, a great blessing that were getting help like this. It’s just great to know that we’re not alone, and there’s other people out there to help us,” she said. “Traveling is a big, big part in taking care of her. The benefit is going to help tremendously with helping out with our travel expenses.

I just want to give a big thank you. These people, the Valley with a Heart - these people have hearts of gold,” she said while tearing up.

As dozens of members and volunteers started selling tickets and dishing up everything from hamburgers and hotdogs to haluski and pierogies to hungry patrons, Amber Morgan and Tara Hewes were taking shelter from the rain under the kitchen’s canopy. Morgan said she attended last year’s benefit and ride, and was hoping that the rain wouldn’t affect the event negatively.

Hewes said this was her first time attending the event. The Millville resident said she was excited for the ride, but was happy to still come and support such a great cause even though it was cancelled.

“We were interested in the ride, but of course the weather kept us from riding,” she said. “But we’re still here for the kids.”

As the afternoon approached with more cars and motorcycles pulling in, Brett Kennedy and his girlfriend, Bryana Sudul stood under the pavilion while they watched over Brett’s 7 month-old daughter, Emma. The third beneficiary of the event, Emma was born with a heart condition, and requires regular trips to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia as well as Geisinger Danville.

“Emma was born with a VSD, which was a hole in her heart. We ended up getting reached out to by (Swoyersville Mayor) Chris Concert that told us about Valley With a Heart. He told us a little bit about who they are, we filled out the application and they got in touch with us immediately,” Kennedy said. “They were a great help right from the very beginning, I couldn’t thank them enough for everything they’ve done.”

Besides providing gas cards, the Hunlock Creek resident said that Valley With a Heart assisted in paying for hotel rooms when Emma had to stay in the hospital overnight, and is also helping to lower the cost of medical bills. Today, Kennedy said that Emma is doing much better, but will remain on breathing treatments for an unknown amount of time. “She’s doing absolutely amazing now. We’re finally on the right track.”

To donate or apply for assistance for a child or family in need, visit www.valleywithaheart.com.

9/4/2017

Event raises money for ailing children

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

Lori Trapano of Hunlock Creek never expected to wear a pink shirt to Valley With a Heart benefits’ annual ride and family picnic.

Pink shirts identified family members of those who would benefit from funds raised at the event for sick children in the Wyoming Valley, and this year, Trapano came to support her granddaughter, Emma Kennedy.

“It’s wonderful,” she said. “We’ve been involved for years ... they do wonderful things for the valley.”

Seven-month-old Emma was born with a ventricular septal defect, or a hole in her heart, according to her father, Brett Kennedy. Emma was named one of the “poster children” for this year’s benefit, the 17th Valley with a Heart Benefits has hosted.

“We’re really grateful,” he said. “We can’t thank them enough for everything they’ve done.”

Morning rain canceled the scheduled motorcycle ride, but plenty of people showed up for the bands, food and vendors at St. Faustina’s Grove throughout Sunday afternoon, Valley With a Heart Benefits president Rick Tamarantz said.

“Once the sun came out, people would be here,” he said.

Tamarantz expected the event to raise \$750,000 to help children in the community, especially the poster-children like Emma, 2-year-old Callie Moseley of Bear Creek, and 13-year-old Joanna Shaw of Swoyersville.

“All of the profits go back into the community,” Tamarantz said.

After watching a performance by her husband’s band, Big Country, Trapano got a chance to observe the crowd enjoying the event and helping the benefit.

“It’s very warming to know you’re part of such a great community,” she said.

8/27/2017

Nanticoke’s Bob Bertoni helping the Little League World Series get calls right

By Tom Robinson - For Times Leader

Bob Bertoni looks at the monitors and is one of the guys who officially decides when a fellow umpire has been incorrect.

And when he does, Bertoni said he has a reaction that is opposite of what might be assumed.

“It has just made me realize how much harder it is to umpire a game,” said Bertoni, the Nanticoke resident who, along with Chris Thomas from Old Forge, will be in the replay room Sunday for the Little League Baseball World Series championship game. “Even when we overturn an umpire’s call, nine times out of 10, I say to myself, ‘I would have made the same call he did,’ because it’s just that bang-bang.

“We have the luxury of looking at it a few times at a few different angles, whereas they are making a split-second call right then and there.”

As a fellow umpire, Bertoni who doubles as a local Little League administrator, has an understanding of the game from perspectives both on and off the field.

Bertoni and Thomas are among the six veteran umpires, three at a time, who have worked the replay room in games throughout the series, which began Aug. 17 and concludes at 3 p.m. Sunday with Lufkin, Texas, taking on Kitasuna from Tokyo, Japan, on ABC.

Over that time, Bertoni said the on-field umpires and those officiating the game with the aid of video learn to understand and appreciate each other.

“I give them a ton of credit. The umpires take it,” said Bertoni, a former Crestwood High School softball coach. “We sit down and tell them, ‘Hey look it, it’s nothing personal. Our job is to make sure we get it right.’

“And, by the end of the week, the (reviews) are not uncommon for them. If it’s a bang-bang play, they know it’s going to get challenged. If a manager has two challenges, he’s going to use them because he can’t take them home with him.” Little League uses video review at just the regional level – the last stop before Williamsport – and the World Series once ESPN and its partners have crews in place to broadcast games. Managers can ask the video to be checked on reviewable plays up until the point they are wrong twice in the same game.

The World Series final represents the end of a long three-week stretch for Bertoni, who has worked the Mid-Atlantic and New England Regionals in Bristol, Conn., the last two seasons.

The job is a natural for Bertoni. He has developed a passion for umpiring and Little League through decades of involvement in both, often at the same time.

Bertoni has spent 37 years in Little League Baseball, 26 of them on the staff of Pennsylvania Districts 16 and 31, based in Luzerne County. For the last three years, Bertoni has been the district administrator, the top organizational position, for Districts 16 and 31.

As an umpire, Bertoni worked his first district tournament games in 1982 as an 18-year-old. He has been on the field for Eastern Regionals (combined Mid-Atlantic and New England) in both baseball and softball and worked the 1999 Junior Little League Baseball World Series for 13- and 14-year-olds in Kirkland, Wash.

That experience helps all the umpires in the review room get to work, at times, before a video review becomes official.

“We have headsets on so they’ll say, ‘the manager is challenging this play’,” Bertoni said. “Well, before he gets to us, we know pretty much if he’s going to challenge something, so we’re already looking at the replay before he even gets to us.”

The chairman of the three-man crew asks ESPN for the replay to get the process started. Although there is a technician on hand to assist if needed, the umpires are all trained on the equipment, so they can quickly look at what they want, the way they want to view it.

Instead of groups of three rotating, all six will be in the room for the finals today.

Bertoni said that will not create any difficulties. He said the three-men crews are not voting 2-1 on decisions. They’re generally unanimous.

“I can’t think of one time we’ve disagreed because it’s right there in front of us,” he said. “We get better views than you get on TV and we have the equipment to stop it and start it and look at it from different angles that the public doesn’t have.

“We don’t disagree because we have the facts right in front of us.”

And, when the facts provide enough conclusive evidence to overturn the calls their on-field colleagues have made, the video reviewers do not hesitate to overturn decisions and “get it right.”

8/27/2017

Students face new drug policies

Citizens Voice - Exerpt

Greater Nanticoke school district plans to have the life-saving drug naloxone in schools this year to deal with the opioid crisis and possible overdoses in school.

“District policy addresses the proper storage and administration on Narcan in the event it’s ever needed,” said Ronald Grevera, superintendent at Greater Nanticoke Area. “This is a proactive step with the hope that it will never need to be utilized.”

Greater Nanticoke expects to receive Narcan in September from the state, which will provide a set amount and is not providing a monetary grant for the district to buy Narcan, Grevera said.

New attendance rules

School districts this year are required to implement new state-mandated attendance regulations and must now hold conferences with parents after a student has a third unexcused absence.

At the conference, district officials and parents will discuss truancy and develop an attendance improvement plan. A

fourth unexcused absence will result in referral to a district magistrate, and districts also must report additional unexcused absences to either the magistrate or the county children and youth agency.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Greater Nanticoke Area School District, and throughout the year, the district will be recognizing the founding of the district through athletic events, Grevera said.

The first event was at Friday's football game, and alumni who played football for Nanticoke between 1967-2017 were admitted for free, Grevera said. The district unveiled a new state of the art lighting system at the alumni night game. The LED system was a project through Musco Lighting, which has provided sports stadium lighting at Clemson University, Auburn University, the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans, Notre Dame Stadium, Petco Park in San Diego and Ford Field in Detroit, Grevera said.

Kennedy Elementary School will remain under construction this year and will reopen for 2018-19 as the Kennedy Early Childhood Center for Pre-K through the second grade.

"The new school will be equipped with a multipurpose room which will serve as a gym and full service cafeteria, special education offices, nurses suite, numerous classrooms including two pre-K classrooms and a large group instruction room that will be utilized as a media center and a room for special programs," Grevera said.

While construction is taking place this year, the road into the high school across from Noble Street will be shut down as construction is expected to continue through June 2018.

The high school this year will offer a career exploration course, which is new to the high school curriculum, Grevera said.

"In addition to examining numerous areas of careers, students will have an opportunity to complete job shadows to determine a career path," Grevera said.

8/26/2017

Nanticoke artist Leonardo Davenport, known for storefront art, dies at 63

smocarsky@timesleader.com

Leonardo Davenport, a local artist known for his "splash art" — mainly painting storefront windows for Christmastime and other occasions — died Tuesday. He was 63.

Anne Carmody, receptionist at Geisinger Health System on Public Square in Wilkes-Barre, said staffers were sad when they learned of Davenport's death.

"He was such a gentleman, we just fell in love with him. He's been here 10 years painting our windows for the holidays." Carmody said, adding that Davenport helped bring attention to "Valley Santa" when he painted a waif-like child that represents the charity on the Geisinger windows.

"A lot of our employees don't live in the Wyoming Valley and didn't know about Valley Santa. His paintings led people to ask about it," Carmody said.

Mary Rossi, director of administration at Joyce Insurance Group in Pittston, said she's known Davenport for several years, since she called and asked him to paint the agency's windows.

Rossi, a founder of the Miles for Michael charity, which is named for the late Michael Joyce and assists families of cancer patients with travel expenses, said Davenport sought help from the charity when his daughter became ill. Every holiday season since, he painted something about Miles for Michael on the agency windows.

"He just came up last week to (paint the windows for) the tomato festival for us," Rossi said, noting he didn't appear in very good health and wasn't his usual "talkative" self. "I don't know what we're going to do for Paint Pittston Pink" without him.

Davenport told the Times Leader in 2015 that his first name wasn't always Leonardo. "I'd tell people my name was Leonard, and they'd forget it," he said. "I added the 'o' and now they remember."

"He was a kind, gentle, and very happy man and he'll be missed so much," Ryan Davenport, of Tipp City, Ohio, wrote of his father on Facebook.

Details for funeral arrangements were not available.

8/25/2017

'What a talent:' Local artist Leonardo Davenport remembered

Denise Allabaugh - Citizens Voice

Leonardo Ray Davenport, an artist well-known for painting business windows throughout Northeast Pennsylvania, died Tuesday. He was 63.

Davenport, owner of Paintings by Leonardo in Nanticoke, posted on Facebook earlier this month that he had suffered a heat stroke, has been feeling exhausted and fatigued and his painting business suffered.

As a painter for more than 30 years, Davenport was known for his unique style and the joy he brought to people who enjoyed his artwork. He often wore a beret and colorful outfits as he painted.

John Maday, president of the Downtown Wilkes-Barre Business Association, said Davenport was a “major force” in downtown Wilkes-Barre’s annual “Window Wonderland” project.

During the holidays, Davenport volunteered to paint windows at some downtown Wilkes-Barre businesses for free. Among them, he painted Valley Santa on Geisinger Health Plan’s building on Public Square in honor of the charity that ensures children in need throughout Luzerne County have Christmas presents. He also volunteered to paint the F.M. Kirby Center’s windows for free and completed paid jobs painting holiday scenes on windows throughout the area at businesses such as Curry Donuts on Public Square and The Citizens’ Voice.

His artwork “enhanced our building for the holiday season,” said Stephen Parulski, marketing and events coordinator at The Citizens’ Voice.

Davenport also painted windows at The Citizens’ Voice book sale held at the Wyoming Valley Mall, he said.

Maday said he could tell just by watching Davenport paint that he really enjoyed what he was doing.

“The thing that always impressed me was how quick he did what he did. He was unique and unconventional in his technique. He was absolutely a free spirit. He was such a unique individual,” Maday said. “After I saw his style of work, every so often I would be driving around and I would notice his paintings on other businesses and I said, ‘That’s Leonardo’s.’ His work was all over the valley. He had that unique way of doing what he did.”

Recently, Davenport painted windows to celebrate the Pittston Tomato Festival at many Pittston businesses, including Joyce Insurance Group.

Davenport painted the business’s windows for at least 10 years, said Bill Joyce, who owns the business with his brothers.

In addition to the Tomato Festival, Davenport also painted the business’s windows for St. Patrick’s Day, Christmas and Paint Pittston Pink.

“He would do all the windows in town. He was very creative. He did a great job with it and it was always something different,” Joyce said. “We didn’t even have to call him. He just came. We’re going to miss him.”

Roseann Chaump, who owns the Hair Station in Pittston, said she always admired his artwork in downtown Pittston so she called him a few months ago to paint her salon window. She called him in the morning and he showed up a few hours later, she said.

“I just got a kick out of him,” Chaump said. “He was the nicest, sweetest guy. He parked in front of the salon and he had 100 different colors of paint. He had a little transistor radio and he put his little beret on and he went to town painting my window. It was very entertaining to watch him. I thought, ‘What a talent.’”

When Davenport returned to remove the paint from her window, he completed the job in exchange for a haircut, Chaump said.

Davenport painted windows in several other communities. Brenda Bartlett, owner of Village Pet Supplies & Gifts in Hanover Twp., said Davenport was the window artist for her business for many years. His “beautiful artwork” helped tremendously in drawing attention to her business’s grand opening after the flood in 2011, she said.

“His creativity was constantly complimented by customers,” Bartlett said. “He was an extremely talented artist and a gentle kind and sweet man. He will be greatly missed by our entire staff.”

8/11/2017

GNA board president resigns

mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

The [Greater Nanticoke Area School](#) Board voted Thursday to appoint Len Olzinski as board president to replace Ryan Verazin, who has resigned from the board.

The board has 30 days to appoint someone to Verazin’s board seat, solicitor Vito DeLuca said. The board will seek interested applicants through an advertisement.

Top Searches

Verazin said he resigned from the school board because he is taking a job as executive director of the Nanticoke Housing Authority, which receives federal funding. Verazin was first elected to the board in 2009 and became board president in 2013.

“It has been an absolute honor to serve my alma mater on the school board,” Verazin said. “There has been a lot of

change for the better.”

Also at Wednesday’s meeting, the board approved a new policy establishing procedures on storing and using the life-saving drug naloxone in district schools. The drug is also known by the brand name Narcan and is an overdose-reversal agent used in cases of opiate overdoses.

The district will obtain a state grant to buy Narcan and should have the drug in schools sometime in September, Superintendent Ronald Grevera said.

The school board also voted to appoint retired state police Trooper Raymond Whittaker as school resource officer for \$40,000 a year. The district last year paid Nanticoke around \$60,000 to station a city police officer at the school campus, Grevera said.

8/11/2017

Greater Nanticoke Area board president steps down

mguydish@timesleader.com

[Greater Nanticoke Area School](#) Board President Ryan Verazin has resigned, citing a new job as executive director of the Nanticoke Housing Authority.

The board this week voted to appoint member Len Olzinski as president.

Under state law, the board has 30 days to appoint someone to fill Verazin’s seat. If the board cannot agree on a replacement, the choice would be turned over to a Luzerne County judge.

District solicitor Vito DeLuca said the board will advertise to seek candidates interested in the job.

The next regular board meeting is set for Sept. 14, which is more than 30 days.

If necessary, the board will move up the meeting or schedule a special session to vote on Verazin’s replacement.

Verazin was elected to the board in 2009 and became president in 2013. His tenure as president covered some high-profile moves, including replacing long-time Superintendent Anthony Perrone with current Superintendent Ron Grevera; removing Perrone’s name from the campus parking lot; and launching the expansion and renovation of Kennedy Elementary, converting it to the Kennedy Early Childhood Center.

8/6/2017

Collins: An inspiring return to the ballpark for Kreitzer

dcollins@timeshamrock.com

MOOSIC

There had to be part of Aaron Kreitzer that wondered what he was doing in that room. There were TV cameras in front of a podium, a couple of reporters standing in front of it, scribbling as fast as they could write into notebooks and recording what they missed onto their smart phones. He’s such a big baseball fan, chances are he has read or watched their reports.

He stood at that press conference at PNC Field on Tuesday, and his eyes moved around the room like a kid waking up on Christmas. The guy at the podium was David Abrams. He owns the team Aaron has come to love. The guy standing off to his right is Josh Olerud, that team’s president and general manager. In the back of the room, taking it all in, stood Randy Mobley. He’s the president of the entire International League.

Aaron is just a kid proudly sporting his official RailRiders jersey. A kid who has been through his share of difficult times. More, actually. A kid very much at the center of everything guys like Abrams and Olerud talked about that day as they updated reporters on events planned around the Sept. 19 Triple-A National Championship Game at PNC Field. We’ve known something since Abrams went public with his own cancer battle in June.

He and the RailRiders were pushing to make the title game as much a fund-raiser for cancer research and a vehicle for building awareness as it is a baseball game. On this day, Abrams introduced two area natives who will be among 15 “game ambassadors” who will try to drum up support for the game in local communities around Northeast Pennsylvania.

One is Aaron. To Aaron, it’s a chance to give back to those who have given him so much.

“Hi, I’m Aaron,” he said quietly, standing behind the lectern. “Ever since I was diagnosed, the whole community has really been behind me, and I’m just really excited for the game.”

The team that hopes to play in that game is just as excited for him.

Team support

Back in March, Aaron looked every bit like a typical 18-year-old. He opened his final baseball season at Nanticoke Area

High School, practicing to secure his starting spot in the outfield. Prom beckoned. So did graduation. But three months before that, and just one week before his first scrimmage with the Trojans, he and his family received devastating news. He hadn't been feeling quite right, and after tests, doctors diagnosed him with acute myeloid leukemia, an aggressive cancer that starts in the bone marrow but can move quickly into the blood and possibly other parts of the body. A fight for his life was on, and Aaron put up his dukes. But what hurt him as much as anything, he said, was that baseball season came and went without him.

Aaron loves the game. He rooted for the Yankees from such a young age, he can't even remember why he started. His most vivid memories of childhood revolve around a baseball diamond. He smiles when he talks about his team back in the Newport Little League. It went winless one year, then played for the championship the next, he said, nodding his head proudly. Same kids both years, too. He still counts them among his best friends.

Aaron's first job even came at the ballpark. He helped his uncle, Pat Revello, prepare pizza dough at the Revello's Pizza stand at PNC Field the last two summers.

When he went to the hospital to start treatments, his baseball teammates were there. They were there, too, when he was bedridden and struggling to eat and drink, when his health deteriorated in mid-June. When they graduated from high school and he was too sick to attend the ceremony. When he needed a major surgery to help him later that month.

Aaron fought leukemia in a hospital bed, and many in the community were rallying around him outside. There were softball tournaments and golf classics and raffles to benefit his family. A player for rival Hanover Area, pitcher and shortstop Matt Clarke, even helped organize a charity exhibition between the schools in Aaron's honor.

As happy as that made him, Aaron still felt the sting of not being able to play in a game like that.

"It was just ... weird," he said. "To hear about (Nanticoke) playing, and to not be there? It was weird not playing, because this was the first year I didn't play any baseball. I was in the hospital, but I knew it was spring, and it was summer, and I wasn't on the baseball field."

So, the RailRiders brought the baseball field to him.

Hope reigns

As part of their annual HOPE Week work in June, the RailRiders were scheduled to visit Aaron in the hospital. They sent him a video message instead, wishing him well with the surgery. But in the six weeks since, his bonds with the team have only strengthened.

One player who stood out, he said, was Tyler Austin, who got called to the big leagues right around the time Aaron got wheeled toward the operating room. Austin's fight with cancer is well-known. He was diagnosed with testicular cancer when he was 17, and he has since made a full recovery.

When he heard about Aaron, and what he was going through, it hit home for Austin. He made sure Aaron received an autographed bat, and he stayed in as close contact as he could with him through Twitter, a kid at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a big leaguer striving to carve a place in the Bronx.

"It's always good when you see someone fighting like he is," Austin said. "This is a lot of stuff to deal with. It's not like you're going to wake up one morning and this is going to be gone. It's a good story, and I pray for him every day. I pray, every day, for his recovery."

Aaron is doing well now. Since the surgery, he said, he has begun to feel much better. He can eat and drink pretty much what he wants. Sitting in the sun for extended periods still bothers him, but he anticipates he'll be able to be back at the ballpark more as the summer proceeds. He still has a few treatments left, but he's confident. He'll fight cancer. He's ready.

"He's becoming a big RailRiders fan," Olerud said, "but we're bigger Aaron fans."

It's funny the power an athlete has. Knowing guys like Austin and the rest of the RailRiders supported him made a world of difference for Aaron Kreitzer. Such a difference that the best way he can think to repay the RailRiders is by rallying the community behind them, by bringing them to PNC Field to watch a championship game in September with the hopes they'll be playing in it.

If not, so be it. Aaron will be where he always wants to be anyway, the place to which he fought so hard to return.

8/3/2017

Hall welcomes 12 new members

Citizens Voice - Staff report

Gary Williams

Williams graduated from Nanticoke Area in 1969, followed by graduation from Wilkes College in 1973 with a B.A. in physics, physical science and math.

He began teaching in Greater Nanticoke Area in 1973 and was head golf coach from 1978 to 1982, sending four players to states.

He was head softball coach from 1991 to 2012 and finished with 330 wins, six league titles, six District 2 titles and two PIAA Championships.

Gary is married to the former Ann Zubritski. They have twin daughters Kelsey and Hollie, who with their husbands Blair Cannon and Dennis Williams have three daughters, Emerson 7, Quinn 5 and Elyse 4.

7/30/2017

Families build birdhouses together at Mill Memorial Library in Nanticoke

Families share craft time at Mill Memorial Library

mbiebel@timesleader.com

If you wondered where families had gathered to build birdhouses on a recent Tuesday evening, all you had to do was follow the sound of hammering at the Mill Memorial Library.

“It’s amazing we didn’t get a finger squished,” Audrey Urban, of Wilkes-Barre, happily reported after she and her daughters, 6-year-old Xena and 3-year-old Isis, took turns nailing wooden boards together.

As the girls painted their birdhouse red, teal and purple, Urban said she might install it outdoors, attached to the family clothesline pole. If that doesn’t work out, she said, “it will find a home in my father-in-law’s yard.”

Members of the Lombardi family, meanwhile, were getting ready to dip their brushes into the paint activities director Dena Bobbin was doling out, with 4-year-old Gabrielle voting for purple and 5-year-old Ella voting for pink.

Each daughter would get her wish, Dana Lombardi said, explaining their multi-color birdhouse would be pink, purple and — in keeping with the preferred color of her son, Jake — red.

We see quite a bit of animals,” Dana Lombardi said. “We’re living in Sweet Valley, and we have deer and bears and squirrels and birds.”

“I found a bird’s nest,” Ella Lombardi said excitedly, adding there weren’t any birds in it.

Maybe birds will come to the new birdhouse. Ella and Gabrielle hope so.

Seven-year-old Garrett Makowski, of Wapwallopen, also hopes birds will come to the birdhouse he built with help from his parents.

Melanie and Lee Makowski have spotted and helped their son identify many birds around the area, including “hairy woodpeckers, cardinals, yellow finches, blue buntings and blue jays,” Melanie Makowski said.

For the Makowskis, the recent birdhouse-building session, which was part of “Build a Better World Week,” marked their first visit to the Nanticoke library. They came because their relatives David and Michelle Vnuk, of Newport Township, brought their 7-year-old son, Nathan, and invited the Makowskis to join them.

“Look, I made ‘brown,’” Nathan said as he dipped a paintbrush into a jar of water and watched it turn darker.

“I’m having a blast,” said his father, David, whose affinity for carpentry comes in handy in his job as an instructor at the Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center.

For other parents, the carpentry aspect of birdhouse building was more of a novel experience.

Audrey Urban, for one, said she brings her children to the library primarily for the reading opportunities.

“These two get tons of books out of the library,” she said. “It must be, like, 50 a week.”

The chance to make a craft or join the LEGO Club only adds to family fun, she said.

And, the crafters’ efforts might end up sheltering some families of birds.

“There’s a ‘mommy bird,’ a ‘daddy bird’ and an ‘uncle bird,’” Michelle Vnuk said with a nod toward 7-year-old Nathan. “That’s how he describes them.”

7/29/2017

Library event lets kids meet animals that were given a second chance

Geri Gibbons - For Times Leader

Jessica Exley once got pulled over for swerving a bit before pulling her car to the side of the road.

Looking behind her, Exley saw flashing lights and then a policeman making her way over to her car window.

When the policeman asked what was going on, she responded, “I was securing my alligator.”

At first, the officer thought she might have been drinking — until she rolled down her back window.

“That’s an alligator,” he said.

“Yes, it is,” said Exley.

When asked why she had an alligator in her car, Exley told the officer they were returning from a reptile beauty show. “She took first place at that show,” Exley said.

Exley, who owns Endless Dreams Animals, was quick to share this and other stories with attendees young and old at a presentation at the Mill Memorial Library on Saturday.

Endless Dreams Animals specializes in bringing “animals to you and your event,” and exists as an educational rescue and retreat.

Exley, several volunteers and about 15 animals were on scene at the event providing information and inspiration to attendees.

Each animal, Exley said, has a story, has a personality and deserves a second chance.

For example, Heidi, an alpaca, was brought to the rescue because her previous owners said she wasn’t “show ready.”

At first, Exley couldn’t figure out why. The beautiful animal with soft, clean fur and a good spirit seemed to be the perfect fit for interacting with an audience.

“Then we took her to a nursing home,” Exley said. “After an hour, she decided she was done. She laid down and made the residents come to her.”

Tiffany Mears, of Nanticoke, attended the event, which was part of a library summer series, with her children, Michael, 7, and Destiny, 13.

Mears said both of her children love animals and are always excited when they get a chance to see them up close.

“We come every time the annual rescue is at the library,” she said. “My son always chooses the zoo for his birthday.”

Michael, she said, had some limits when it came to being in close proximity to the animals.

“Destiny will pet anything,” she said. “Michael doesn’t do snakes.”

Donna Exley, Jessica’s mother and a rescue volunteer, said about 100 animals live at the rescue in Benton.

Exley, who instilled a love for animals in her daughter, introduced Heidi to the children, encouraging them to pet her or even give her a hug.

Still, Exley reminded attendees that animals need to be respected.

“You don’t want to come up behind an animal suddenly,” she said. “That will spook them.”

Also part of the presentation was Cocoa, a cockatoo who doesn’t like being alone.

“I got a job when I was gone about 14 hours,” said Jessica Exley. “She wasn’t used to me being gone that long. She pulled out many of her feathers.”

Joe Bobbin, of Nanticoke, attended the event with his daughter, Lilly, 7. The activity, he said, has become a tradition.

“We come here all the time,” he said. “We were just here the other day building a birdhouse.”

To Jessica Exley, being the director of Endless Dreams Animals for over 10 years has been much more than a job, it’s a life mission.

“I’ve loved animals for as long as I can remember,” she said. “I take in animals that might have been neglected or perhaps their owners are sick and could no longer take care of them.”

A nonprofit, Endless Dreams Animals depends solely on donations of money, other items and volunteer labor.

“I don’t focus on money,” Jessica Exley said. “I just want these animals to have good quality lives.”

Everyone, she said, deserves a second chance.

7/24/2017

Ceramics class provides creative outlet for children

Amanda Hrycyna | For Times Leader

Nearly two dozen children learned how to turn a liquid mixture of clay into some beautiful ceramics Saturday at the Mill Memorial Library.

Lori Duda, 39, of Nanticoke, and her daughter Emily, 8, explained the process, which begins with a batch of slip — a liquid mixture of clay particles.

“I don’t think a lot of people understand how long it takes to make ceramics,” said Duda, adding that she and her daughter make ceramics and pottery in their garage.

Dipping her finger into the gray, milky liquid the consistency of heavy cream, she asked a few kids to help her pour it from a large measuring cup into two holes in a wooden mold. After the mold was filled, she tapped it on the table a few times to get the air bubbles out.

“If there’s an air bubble, the piece will explode in the kiln,” she said, pointing out that a kiln is an oven that fires pottery.

Duda then inverted the mold onto a bucket to catch any excess liquid. After a few minutes, she cleaned off the excess

clay near the openings of the holes with a plastic scraper. In about 24 hours, the mold would be safe to open and the shapes inside would be intact.

Cracking open another mold, which was identical to the one she used for the demonstration, Duda carefully pulled out two round, gray balls called greenware, which she passed around for the kids to feel.

Each child was given a finished replica of the demonstration ceramic to paint. Since the theme of the event was "Christmas in July," the ceramic piece given to the children was in the shape of an ornament.

"It doesn't have to be an ornament," Duda said. "It can be turned sideways and you can put little feet on it and make it a pig." Emily also showed how the ornament can become a tiny lantern by poking holes and cutting off the top before firing. "You can put a tea light in it."

With a palette of yellow and black, 11-year-old Ryan Kenney, of Plymouth Township, said he wanted to make his ornament look like a smiley face. "It's fun how you can just paint whatever you want," he said.

Ryan joined several of his good friends at the table as each one painted one-of-a-kind pieces. "I'm going to make mine a sort of Pokémon theme," added Connor Kosicki, 12, also of Plymouth Township.

The boys, who are cousins, said they and their friends attend a lot of events at the library. "My mom usually goes on the [library's Facebook page](#) to see what's going on," said Connor. "It's pretty fun. You can really express your creativity."

WHAT'S NEXT

The library will host a birdhouse making event on Tuesday, and a visit from animals of the Endless Dreams Animal Shelter next Saturday.

7/21/2017

'Grateful' Kreitzer takes part in game

eshultz@citizensvoice.com

The pre-game introductions likely were more memorable than a senior all-star baseball game that lasted all of seven outs Thursday.

A fierce thunderstorm rolled through the Mountain Post 781 baseball field in the top of the second inning, marking an early end to the Wyoming Valley Conference's senior all-star game. The conference's East team led 3-0 and had just put two runners on board, while only four West players had at-bats.

What could have been chalked up as a wasted car ride to the field for some was still worth it for at least one member for the East team, though. Nanticoke Area graduate Aaron Kreitzer got to don a jersey, walk the dugout and line up on the first base line for the national anthem with the rest of the players from his graduating class.

It's the first time Kreitzer, who is battling leukemia, got to do any of those things with high school teammates this season. So, the washed out game still had meaning for Kreitzer, who at one point wasn't even sure he'd be back in the area by summer's end.

"It just made me feel happy to be back there, that I was able to get back there this year," said Kreitzer, who was named the game's MVP. "Being back for the summer for a little bit and being there, I was grateful to be back."

Kreitzer was introduced as a member of the East's coaching staff. It was far from the first gesture sent his way since word of his fight got around.

His Trojans and Hanover Area held a doubleheader of exhibition games between their softball and baseball games on April 30. Proceeds from the game went to the Kreitzer family.

A golf event in late June at Blue Ridge Trail Golf Club was formed to benefit the family, too.

More signs of support came last month when the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders gave him a hospital visit and let him throw a first pitch, and when he was named an honorary captain for the WVC's side of the Field of Dreams all-star game, which pits the conference's top seniors against the Lackawanna League's.

The shows of support seemed to come one after another. They hardly had to pick up Kreitzer's spirits, because the last event had lifted him just days or weeks before.

Kreitzer thanked everyone for what he called a "ridiculous amount of support" that he couldn't have imagined.

"It's just a constant reminder that everyone's behind you," he said. "There was no point that I felt it was just me and my family. I felt like my whole community was behind me."

Complications recently sent Kreitzer to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and he'll return there for further treatment. Things still seem to be looking up, though.

"I feel like the worst is behind me," Kreitzer said. "I feel great, almost back to normal."

Although he's lost strength since being in the hospital, he was still healthy enough to attend Thursday's game.

He watched as Wyoming Area's Mike Bonita and Meyers' Colin Pasone led off with a single and double, eventually

scoring runs along with Dallas' J.D. Barrett. Tunkhannock's Brian Muckin made the defensive play of the game, laying out on his way to the warning track to snag a fly ball by Hazleton Area's Livan Reinoso to end the West's first inning. The storm that came minutes later didn't put a damper on Kreitzer's day. "Just being in the dugout and talking to the guys was amazing," he said.



7/20/2017

Influential doctor honored in Nanticoke

Staff report - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke city and state officials recognized Wednesday as "Dr. Dudrick Day" in the city and unveiled a historical marker to be placed outside Standley Dudrick's childhood home on West Union Street.

The descendant of Nanticoke coal miners, Dudrick invented the intravenous feeding method known as total parenteral nutrition, or TPN, which is considered one of the most important breakthroughs in modern surgery.

Known as the "father of intravenous feeding," Dudrick is constantly ranked among the most influential doctors in world history for his pioneering work, which he unveiled in July 1967 at age 32.

His work is credited with saving millions of lives. This month marks the 50th anniversary of Dudrick's invention.

Dudrick invented TPN while a surgical resident at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. He always intended to return to the Wyoming Valley, but after his invention, his skill level was too far advanced for what was being practiced in local hospitals.

He became a professor of surgery at Penn. He helped launch the surgery department of the University of Texas Medical School and became chief of surgery at the university's hospital.

He was named chairman of the surgery department at Pennsylvania Hospital, the oldest in the nation. Later, he was tapped as surgery department chairman at the Yale University School of Medicine.

Dudrick, 82, is now the director of the physician assistant program at Misericordia University and is a professor of surgery at Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine.



7/16/2017

Influential area doctor to be celebrated in Nanticoke

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

As a rookie physician in the early 1960s, Dr. Stanley Dudrick was so frustrated with his patients dying he nearly

switched specialties. Instead, the Nanticoke native revolutionized the medical world.

The descendant of Nanticoke coal miners, Dudrick invented the intravenous feeding method known as total parenteral nutrition, or TPN, which is considered one of the most important breakthroughs in modern surgery.

Known as the “father of intravenous feeding,” Dudrick is constantly ranked among the most influential doctors in world history for his pioneering work, which he unveiled in July 1967 at age 32. His work is credited with saving millions of lives.

This month marks the 50th anniversary of Dudrick’s invention and his hometown is planning a big honor for him this week.

“It seems very simple and obvious now, but at the time it terrified the medical profession,” Dudrick said. “A lot of people said it wouldn’t work and ‘you’re going to kill people.’ I had to convince doctors not only that it would work, but it would be safe. Soon, it took the world by storm. And the rest is history.”

Nanticoke City will recognize Wednesday as “Dr. Dudrick Day.” A historical marker will be unveiled at the monthly city council meeting that night at Luzerne County Community College. The plaque will eventually be erected outside Dudrick’s childhood home on West Union Street, which his grandfather built during evenings after long days working underground in the mines.

Dudrick invented TPN while a surgical resident at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. He always intended to return to the Wyoming Valley, but after his invention, his skill level was too far advanced for what was being practiced in local hospitals.

He became a professor of surgery at Penn. He helped launch the surgery department of the University of Texas Medical School and became chief of surgery at the university’s hospital. He was named chairman of the surgery department at Pennsylvania Hospital, the oldest in the nation. Later, he was tapped as surgery department chairman at the Yale University School of Medicine.

But Dudrick always longed to come back home. And in 2011, he did.

Dudrick, 82, is now the director of the physician assistant program at Misericordia University and is a professor of surgery at Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine.

“All these years later, I still wanted to come back home to kind of pay back the people who helped me grow up and support me and allowed me to go off and get a great education,” Dudrick said. “I had this emotional draw to come back to the area.”

Dr. Steven J. Scheinman, president and dean of the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, called Dudrick a “mythical character” whose contribution to medicine ranks in importance with the development of open heart surgery and organ transplantation.

“I think it’s fitting that Stan’s monumental contribution has been to nourish people. That’s what true philanthropists do — they find ways to sustain and uplift people and never forget that all the technological wizardry in the world cannot replace simple caring, nurturing and compassion,” Scheinman said.

Scheinman noted Dudrick developed hundreds of scientific and technological advances to invent TPN, but never sought to patent any of his work.

“Had he done so, and licensed and profited from them, he would today be a billionaire,” Scheinman said. “But he felt that to do so would limit access to these advances by patients and their doctors, and limit their benefit, so he intentionally did not do that. So Stan is not just humble and brilliant, he is absolutely selfless.”

On July 19, Nanticoke will honor city native Dr. Stanley Dudrick, who is considered one of the most influential doctors in history.

Dudrick, then a 32-year-old surgical resident at University of Pennsylvania Hospital, invented an intravenous feeding method in July 1967 that has been credited with saving millions of lives.

On Wednesday, the city will host “Dr. Dudrick Day.” A historical plaque in Dudrick’s honor will be unveiled at 6 p.m. Wednesday during the monthly city council meeting, being held at Luzerne County Community College’s educational conference center. The marker will eventually be erected outside Dudrick’s childhood home at 414 W. Union St.

About Dr. Stanley Dudrick

Born: April 9, 1935

Childhood home: 414 W. Union St., Nanticoke

Current residences: Scranton; Naugatuck, Connecticut; and Eaton Center, New Hampshire

High School: Nanticoke High School, Class of 1953

Family: Dudrick and his wife, Theresa, a Pittston native, have been married 59 years. They have six children, 16 grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

Colleges/Education:

B.S. Biology, Franklin and Marshall College (1957)

M.D. University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (1961)

Residency: University of Pennsylvania Hospital

Invented total parenteral nutrition: July 1967

Notable jobs:

University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, professor of surgery

University of Texas Medical School, founding chairman of surgery department and chief of surgery at university hospital

Pennsylvania Hospital, chairman of department of surgery

Yale University School of Medicine, professor of surgery and later chairman of surgery department

Current positions:

Misericordia University: chairman, head professor and medical director of the physician assistant program

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine: professor of surgery

Emeritus professor of surgery at Yale

About total parenteral nutrition

WHAT IS TOTAL PARENTERAL NUTRITION?

Total parenteral nutrition, or TPN, is a method of feeding that bypasses the gastrointestinal tract. Fluids are given into a vein to provide most of the nutrients the body needs. The method is used when a person can not or should not receive feedings or fluids by mouth. TPN delivers a mixture of fluid, electrolytes, sugars, amino acids (protein), vitamins, minerals, and often lipids (fats) into the veins. TPN can provide a better level of nutrition than regular intravenous feedings, which provide only sugars and salts.

HOW IS TPN GIVEN?

An IV line is often placed in a vein in the hand, foot, or scalp. A large vein in the belly button, the umbilical vein, may be used. Sometimes a longer IV, called a central line or peripherally-inserted central catheter line, is used for long-term IV feedings.

SOURCE: MEDLINEPLUS, THE U.S. NATIONAL MEDICAL LIBRARY

Q&A with Dr. Dudrick:

1. As the grandson and son of a coal miner from Nanticoke, what has it been like to have gone on to become one of the most influential doctors in world history?

“My dad and three uncles all had to work in the mines as a condition for my grandfather to keep his job. They worked from age 13 to 21. They started as breaker boys. My family was devoted to keeping me out of the coal mine. My family on both sides supported me getting an education. When I left Nanticoke, I left specifically to try to become a doctor. No one else in town gave me much encouragement. Most doctors said it was going to be ‘a tough, long ride.’ I think they were preparing me to not make it. That energized me to work hard. I went to Franklin and Marshall College and they were the most influential years in my life. They converted me from a kid from Nanticoke into a scholar. It all started there. The thought of becoming one of the most influential physicians in history never would have crossed my mind. I am still in awe of that honor.”

2. You are called the “Father of intravenous feeding.” How did you recognize the need for it and how did you invent it?

“When I was a medical student at Penn, as an intern working with surgical patients, we had a lot of patients who were the most critically ill. The smaller hospitals would send their most challenging patients to Penn. It was life and death every day. I got frustrated. Even though they had good operations, they still died. The chief of surgery said ‘Stanley, it’s not your fault they died.’ He said they died primarily because they are malnourished. I was like, ‘Why don’t we feed

them better?’ He said because of the nature of their problems, we can’t feed them. I’m like, ‘Why don’t we feed them intravenously?’ I thought, as physicians, we could do better. I spent two years working extra hard studying nutrition. After that period of time, I told him I was ready to go into the laboratory. I took a year in the lab and tackled the problem and I was fortunate enough to be successful. It seems very simple and obvious now, but at the time it terrified the medical profession. A lot of people said it wouldn’t work and ‘you’re going to kill people.’ I had to convince doctors not only that it would work, but it would be safe. Soon, it took the world by storm. And the rest is history. I’m still humbled by the results we got.”

3. You once said you always intended to return home to the Wyoming Valley after medical school, but the type of work you got into was too advanced for local hospitals. Was that difficult for you? And what made you decide to return home in 2011 to start working at Misericordia and the regional medical college?

“I was just a kid from Nanticoke who wanted to be as good of a doctor as I could possibly be. I wanted to come home back to Nanticoke to take care of my people. I wanted to do the IV work to be a better doctor. I had no concept it would develop into what it became. Once I got into it, it took over my life. It took me a year or two to realize that I wasn’t going to be able to come home. I had mixed emotions about that. At the University of Pennsylvania, they said, ‘You’re not going back to Nanticoke. You can’t just walk away.’ I had to change my career goals. I became a servant of my own ideas and innovations. I became totally immersed in it. It ran my life. All these years later, I still wanted to come back home to kind of pay back the people who helped me grow up and support me and allowed me to go off and get a great education. I had this emotional draw to come back to the area.”

4. What was it like growing up in Nanticoke?

“It was a pretty positive and pretty idyllic. We were poor, but we didn’t know we were poor. And it didn’t matter. We were happy. We just did what we did. We had fun. We went to school. We tried to grow up and hope to be something special if we could. If I had to live my life over again there, I would do it in a New York minute and I’d love it. My grandfather had seven kids. He built two double-occupancy homes on West Union Street. One had four separate apartments. Another had three, and one for him and his wife. So, he provided housing for all seven kids if they wanted it. I had good friends and neighbors all around. We grew up together. We are able to run around in the fields and work and play. Families were very self sustaining. You learned what you had to do. My grandparents had chickens and turkeys and rabbits. We made things like kielbasa, butter and cheese. We made our own beer and wine from what was right there in the backyard. The biggest negative at the time was the second world war. I could tell you precisely where I was when Pearl Harbor happened. Nanticoke had a great sense of loyalty to the country. After that, all the young men wanted to go serve in the Army, Navy and Marines.”

5. What do you think about the city declaring “Dr. Dudrick Day” and creating a historical marker honoring you?

“I’m hoping we could stimulate and demonstrate to the young people in Nanticoke they could do anything. I am so humbled by it. I would never have thought the mayor and council, the senators and other legislators would be involved. I didn’t even think I’d be in their line of vision or if they even knew about me or cared. I look upon it not so much as a personal kudos to me, but evidence of accomplishment of the community. I am a product of the Nanticoke community. I am beholden to family and neighbors and teachers who worked to teach me, nurture me, and mentor me to get me where I am. It’s acknowledging Nanticoke is a great place to be from and you could accomplish substantial things in your life if you want to. I hope it will be a stimulus to the youngsters.”

6. How are things going at Misericordia and the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine?

“At Misericordia, we have made great progress and there’s great potential. We have a brand new science building we are going to build. They have a bit of that Wyoming Valley caring and compassion that a lot of the country has lost. You meet people in the Wyoming Valley and they are the best health care professionals around. They bring more than education and cognitive abilities. The medical college has grown and developed beyond my expectations. Medical schools cost money. They are very expensive to operate. They started the school with a visionary initiative. They did it against all odds. In the last year or two, I started to get worried. I could see we were going to run out of money. I thought we were going to have to merge. When the Geisinger organization decided to invest in the medical school, that was the most significant advancement that we could have anticipated. It’s a new, idealist young school. Now the school

has everything it needs. Success at the school is now guaranteed. Now, it's 'how great are we going to be,' not 'are we going to make it?' We are going to bring in and attract talent from all over."

7. Are you ever planning to retire?

"No. I keep pretty busy for an old guy. I don't know what I would do. I would maybe write. There's a lot of things I want to write down. I hope I live long enough to do that. But to stop doing what I am doing, I don't know why I would want to do that. I am still able to do it. As long as people still think I'm useful, I want to be as useful as I can for as long as I can. I stopped operating seven years ago, but I still enjoy helping young people achieve their God-given maximum potential. If I could do something to make a young person be as good as they possibly could, that gives me great satisfaction and purpose in life."

7/14/2017

Developer eyes Nanticoke property for potential growth

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

Frank Cawley has seen Pittston's Main Street — where he has a location for his physical therapy practice — improve during the last decade.

He foresees the same thing happening in Nanticoke.

Cawley plans to develop the site of a former nursing home to hold a location for his business — as well as a pharmacy, a fast food restaurant and other tenants.

He is negotiating with the Nanticoke Municipal Authority to purchase the old Nanticoke Villa property, which the authority recently bought for \$825,000 from Arm 3 LLC.

The facility is in the city's downtown, across Arch Street from a Weis Markets grocery store. A parking lot on the site is on the corner of East Main and North Walnut streets.

Cawley plans to move a location of his practice currently at 160 S. Market St., Nanticoke, to the facility, and add a pool for aquatics therapy. Future tenants will include Nockley Family Pharmacy and a fast food restaurant, he said. He is also talking to two other potential tenants.

"We have had a location in Nanticoke, and at the time that we went there, the main street was not developed but was looking to be developed. It's starting to come a long way," Cawley said.

The development will renew a building that has been vacant since an assisted living facility at the site closed in October 2014.

That facility closed after the state Department of Public Welfare opted not to renew the license of its owner at the time, Constantinos Mallios. The department said practices there risked exposing residents to hepatitis B.

Mallios purchased the facility a few months earlier in May 2014, when state regulators refused to renew the license of the previous owner, Ron Halko, after several residents contracted hepatitis B. This occurred after employees used the same blood glucose equipment to treat several patients.

The new use for the property might qualify the authority for state grants, said Mark Grochocki, chief of staff for state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Newport Twp.

"We're hoping that this gets the ball rolling in general in Nanticoke," said authority solicitor Lawrence Moran. "The municipal authority has a lot of big plans to improve and revitalize and redevelop a lot of the downtown."

7/9/2017

Puck Cancer event raises money to help patients

Marcella Kester - Times Leader

Hundreds filled Quality Hill Park in Nanticoke on Saturday, having fun and pucking it out for a worthy cause.

Puck Cancer held its fifth annual fundraising event at the park Saturday, offering a foot-hockey tournament, basket and 50/50 raffles, games, children's activities and more.

Proceeds from the event help the Medical Oncology Associates of Kingston Prescription Fund. The organization has raised roughly \$13,000 for the fund since it began six years ago. This year, organizers are hoping to collect \$10,000.

"And it's possible, which is pretty awesome," Lauren Myers said of the goal.

Myers and her husband, Shawn, began the organization with the help from Dr. Bruce Saidman of Medical Oncology Associates. Shawn grew up playing hockey with his friends at Quality Hill Park, so it made sense to bring the event

back to where it all started, and include some type of hockey tournament.

“My husband’s mother passed away from cancer. She was a patient of Dr. Saidman’s at Medical Oncology, so it’s his way of giving back,” Lauren explained.

What started out as just a few players has grown into a much larger event, and the duo hopes it will get even bigger with time.

Fifteen teams of five players each battled with pucks and sticks on the tennis courts, vying to win their game and advance to the next round. Those crowned hockey champions earned a trophy.

Dave Warren, of Nanticoke, has been playing hockey for 10 years, and has participated in the event for the past three years. This year, he played on the team “Just the Tip.” While he enjoys the games, Warren said being supportive of the mission is what matters most.

“It’s for a good cause. My buddy’s mom passed away from cancer, so he’s been doing this event to raise money for breast cancer, and you’ve got to contribute,” Warren said. “It’s about doing the right thing.”

This year’s game had a special importance to the team, however. On the back of their blue team shirts, “#AK4TheWin” was printed, which was a reference to Aaron Kreitzer. He’s a local 18-year-old who is battling leukemia.

Nearly 100 raffle baskets were donated, including everything from pet supplies to home goods and tailgate gear.

Chances to win a gift card or free items from local restaurants and businesses were also available. Perhaps the most popular raffle was the “Wheelbarrow of Cheer,” which included a wheelbarrow full of various liquors to be raffled to one lucky winner.

As teams played on, attendees enjoyed picnic-style meals and desserts while children crowded a face-painting tent, bounce house and games. One game adults and children alike gathered around involved a very wet outcome for one willing volunteer.

Standing in front of the dunk tank, Ken Thompson took a ball and handed it over to his son, Christopher. Together, they tried to throw the ball at the round metal target and dunk the volunteer inside the tank. After a number of tries, neither hit the mark. But Thompson decided to try again, handing the ball over to Christopher one more time.

The 10-year-old baseball player finally hit the target.

Aside from dunking volunteers, the family also took time to visit and contribute to the memory board. Patrons were able to buy and decorate a ribbon in honor of someone who’s fought, passed away or survived from cancer.

Sitting under the food tent, Clem Krzynefski said he’s now seven years cancer-free. The Nanticoke resident had esophageal cancer, and attends Puck Cancer yearly.

“Very precious is every breath of air I take,” he said. “And I would do anything to help someone who had cancer. ... I’d be right there for anyone who needed it.”

7/5/2017

Nanticoke native, globally known physician to get street honor

Melanie Mizenko - mmizenko@timesleader.com

The Nanticoke native and world-renown physician known as the “Father of Intravenous Feeding” will have a city street named after him July 19, officials say.

In addition to the street distinction, Dr. Stanley J. Dudrick will be honored by Nanticoke City Council with a historical plaque dedication near the house he grew up in, said Elizabeth Zygmunt, of Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine.

Dudrick, 82, was raised on West Union Street and was once named one of the 50 most influential physicians in history by Medscape.com, according to his biography. Medical professionals credit his development of intravenous feeding, or tube feeding, with helping save countless lives over the years. IV feeding allows ill patients who cannot eat to get nutrients through their blood instead of their digestive system.

The feeding technique is one of the four most significant accomplishments in the history of modern surgery, ranking with the discovery and development of antibiotic therapy, anesthesia, and antisepsis procedures to ensure a sterile surgical environment, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association. Many sources also consider Dudrick’s work as one of the three most important advancements in surgery over the past century, along with open heart surgery and organ transplantation, according to information from Geisinger’s Commonwealth School.

Dudrick still serves as a professor of surgery at the Scranton school.

Previous roles include associate chairman of the Department of Surgery and Director of the Program in Surgery at St. Mary’s Hospital, a Yale-affiliated teaching hospital in Waterbury, Connecticut. Other notable work includes serving as a professor of surgery at Yale.

There will be a reception immediately following the July 19 city council meeting, which will be held at Luzerne County Community College's Educational Conference Center, 1333 S. Prospect St., Nanticoke.

Zygmunt said reservations for the reception are required by Monday, July 10. To register, call 570-504-9065; or email events@tcmc.edu.

Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5V41MUsKGY>

7/3/2017

Fireworks event in Nanticoke benefits the community

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

Lilly Makowski couldn't wait to see the fireworks.

"I love the colors," the seven-year-old Alden resident said. "I love all of the colors."

Lilly waited with family and friends for the start of the show at Nanticoke's fourth annual "Big Bang" at Nanticoke Area High School.

She'd come running back to her parent's campsite from the football field where vendors sold food, drinks and game tickets all to benefit community nonprofits like the football team, cheerleading squad, marching band and others.

Nanticoke mayor Rich Wiaterowski sold tickets for raffles and event T-shirts under one of the vendor tents. He said the whole event, from the venue to the fireworks, was paid for by the vendors and does not cost Nanticoke taxpayers a cent.

"We get about 2,500 people," he said.

The fireworks started at dusk, but the event opened at 4 p.m. Wiaterowski said many people showed up even earlier to claim prime parking spots to view the evening's show.

Ryan Verazin and Mark Baron of Nanticoke were a few of the early-birds. Baron said he parked his car in the lot overlooking the baseball field by 9:30 a.m. on Sunday and Verazin arrived by 10:30 a.m.

The two combined campsites with other friends and waited for the show. Verazin said the group has been coming to the event since it started four years ago.

"It's right in town and it benefits the local community," he said.

Wiaterowski said the event has grown over the last four years and he hopes to see it expand even more.

"I'm an entertainer," he said. "The goal is to get this bigger and go down to Lower Broadway."

He thanked the school district for allowing the city to use the facilities free of charge.

"It's just getting everybody out," he said. "It's friends and family having a great time."

6/28/2017

'Family Fun Night' brings out builder in kids at Nanticoke library

Marcella Kester - Times Leader

Children let their imaginations soar as they cut, glued and taped their way to the top of a box-building contest at the Mill Memorial Library on Tuesday.

The event was part of the library's "Family Fun Night," which is held monthly. Working together as a team, each family must construct a particular object using cardboard boxes, egg cartons, duct tape, paper-towel rolls and similar items. At the end of the event, each project gets displayed and judged. A winner is crowned, collecting a Barnes & Noble gift card as a prize.

More than two dozen boxes filled a corner of the children's section, including a table that had an array of craft supplies one could ever need for such a creative challenge.

As the families scattered and began stacking boxes, activities director Dena Bobbin told them the event's only rule: You must make a building or structure.

Bobbin said the event stems from a nationwide summer program initiative called "Build A Better World." She hopes free events such as "Family Fun Night" will bring more patrons into the library system.

"Our goal is once a month to do a family event," she said. "It's just a fun thing for kids and the whole family to do."

Sitting at a table, 3-year-old Skye Percival was busy pushing her gluestick along a piece of colored construction paper. Meanwhile, her 8-year-old sister, Juliana, was preparing to complete a bull's-eye on one side of their house. The sisters were joined by their parents, who were happy to help assemble the boxes to their children's pleasing.

Sara Percival said her children love the library, as Skye comes in with her grandfather on Tuesdays for a toddler program. A lifelong library patron herself, the Nanticoke native says the free events not only help the children socialize with others their age, but also aids development of other needed skills.

"It helps with their dexterity and fine motor skills, and just togetherness with family," said Sara.

Behind them, Stephanie Gatrell helped her two daughters put the finishing touches on their castle. Using five boxes varying in size, the sisters tiered them on top of another and were busily cutting apart an egg carton to use as people. Gatrell said she, too, started bringing her children for the toddler program about six years ago and has since become a library regular.

"They always have fun stuff for the kids," she said of the various events, noting a "Book Bingo." "They really like that because they get to go home with a bunch of new books to read."

Now placing her egg carton cut-outs inside the castle, 10-year-old Olivia Cromer said she wants to continue making things from old boxes at home. Her sister, Sophia, agreed.

"There's cool things about boxes," she added. "I like building and recreating things that aren't that useful."

The next Family Fun Night is set for July. Participants will be building a birdhouse.

6/4/2017

Benefit aids Greater Nanticoke Area athlete with leukemia

Camille Sciolo-Fiotti - Times Leader

Over 500 people packed the Nanticoke Armory on Saturday evening for a benefit to support Aaron Kreitzer, a Nanticoke area senior who is battling leukemia.

Dozens of orange and white balloons were clustered on tables and over 100 raffle baskets lined the perimeter of the huge hall.

Aaron is a starter in the outfield on the school's baseball team and also plays varsity soccer.

Many of those in attendance, including members of his baseball team, wore yellow football jerseys because Aaron is a "huge Michigan fan," said his cousin, Kelly Krietzler, who also helped organize the event.

"We wanted to focus on something other than the leukemia," she said. The orange balloons represent the color of the leukemia ribbon.

Plans to put together the benefit began in March, soon after Aaron was diagnosed, Kelly said. "I knew we had to do something to help."

The \$20 admission included food, beer, soda, dessert and live entertainment by the band Oz. A giant poster of Aaron in his varsity baseball uniform hung on the wall above the band.

"This town really rallies together and surrounds anybody who's going through a tough time," Kelly said, adding that several smaller fundraisers were held prior to Saturday's event. "Countless people donated trays of food and there are over 100 raffle baskets. We have a huge family and word of the event spread fast through Facebook, flyers and word of mouth."

"The doors opened at 4 and at least 40 people were in line," said Kelly. "It's so overwhelming to see how many came out to show support for him and his family. He's doing very well," she said, adding that Aaron couldn't attend the event because he was out of town getting treatment. "He has a great attitude and all of the support is really keeping him going."

"He's such a great kid," Kelly said. "If it were somebody else going through a hard time, he'd be one of the first ones to help."

6/2/2017

Nanticoke police secure grant for drug collection

Citizens Voice

With the help of a program offered by CVS Pharmacy, Nanticoke police will be able to provide a safe place to dispose of medication.

In a Thursday press release, state Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-119, Newport Twp., announced the Nanticoke Police Department received a grant for a drug collection unit through the CVS Health Medication Disposal for Safer Communities Program.

The unit will be located in the lobby of the Nanticoke municipal building and provide "a safe and environmentally responsible way to dispose of unwanted, unused or expired medication, including controlled substances ... with no questions asked," according to the release.

The site will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

6/2/2017

EPA grants will clean up mine-scarred sites in county

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded \$800,000 in brownfield grants to the Earth Conservancy for job training and cleanup of mine-scarred sites in Luzerne County.

Acting EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Cecil Rodrigues announced the grants Thursday at a press conference held on a parcel of formerly mine-scarred land across from Luzerne County Community College.

Two grants totaling \$400,000 will go toward cleaning up two land parcels at "Bliss Bank" near LCCC. The properties sustained damage from several years of coal mining.

"The money will be used to assess the property and clean up the property and hopefully it will lead to further redevelopment," Rodrigues said.

Nanticoke, Newport Twp. and Hanover Twp. come together at one point at Bliss Bank, said Mike Dziak, president and CEO of the Earth Conservancy.

The Conservancy, a nonprofit dedicated to addressing the impact of coal mining in Northeast Pennsylvania, has been working in the area for years, Dziak said.

"This continues the operation to continue reclaiming land in the area," Dziak said. "Our hope is that (the location) will become a new industrial development in the future."

Another \$200,000 grant will go toward restoration work on 6,200 feet of Espy Run in the Nanticoke Creek watershed. The area lost its stream bed due to mining activity and is affected by acid mine drainage.

By restoring the stream, "They not only restore habitat and clean water, but they also stop the discharge of the ugly orange stuff you see in the creek," Jeff Barnett, EPA brownfields project officer, said,

An additional \$200,000 will go toward an environmental job training program for local unemployed residents and veterans.

The Earth Conservancy will work with Penn State University and other partners to create a program to assist unemployed residents in getting the training needed to seek jobs in areas impacted by hazardous waste.

The grants were among those awarded to 172 organizations and communities across the country for brownfield site revitalization.

"This is a great day for the Earth Conservancy and the community," Dziak said.

6/2/2017

Earth Conservancy lands federal grants for local projects

mmizenko@timesleader.com

Nonprofit group Earth Conservancy is receiving \$600,000 in federal grants for environmental projects in Hanover Township and Nanticoke, officials announced Thursday.

The same group, based in Ashley, is also getting another grant - for \$200,000 - for a workforce training program aimed at helping veterans.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced the grants during a ceremony at an abandoned mine site in Nanticoke. The \$600,000 is for brownfield site revitalization. Brownfields are former industrial or commercial sites - including old mine land - where future use is affected by environmental contamination.

"This is a great day for Earth Conservancy," said Cecil A. Rodrigues, acting administrator for EPA's Mid-Atlantic Region. Rodrigues said days like Thursday are vital because it illustrates how the EPA collaborates with non-governmental organizations "to make a better place to live."

The Hanover Township project will cover two Bliss Bank parcels, 200 acres of former mining land. The reclamation will move northeast below the Wilkes-Barre Mountain. When completed, the area could be home to mixed-use development, including recreational sites.

The total grant award for the Hanover reclamation project is \$400,000. The total projected cost is \$1.4 million.

The Nanticoke work will focus on restoration of a segment of Espy Run, a stream which feeds into Nanticoke Creek. Espy Run has been tainted by acid mine drainage.

The total grant award was \$200,000. The total cost for the project is expected to be \$273,000.

Elizabeth Hughes, director of communications for Earth Conservancy, said the projects won't begin until October.

'Meaningful employment'

While the EPA is known for its environmental programs, it actually does much more.

For instance, officials also announced a \$200,000 grant for a workforce training program tailored to veterans. The grant comes via the EPA's Environmental Workforce and Development Job Training Program. Since 1998, more than 16,000 people nationwide have gone through the program, with 12,000 landing full-time jobs. Earth Conservancy, working with Penn State Wilkes-Barre, plans to send 40 students through the curriculum, which includes land surveying techniques. The program begins in the fall. "For displaced workers, especially veterans, it offers a new pathway to help secure meaningful employment," said Michael Dziak, president and CEO of Earth Conservancy.

5/28/2017

WWII Vet to celebrate 93rd birthday on Memorial Day

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

Henry Rishkofski never leaves home without his World War II veteran hat.

"I'm just a proud veteran," the 92-year-old Nanticoke native said.

He'll don his hat as always on Monday, but his day will go a little differently than his normal routine. Not only will Rishkofski turn 93 on Monday, he'll spend his birthday as grand marshal of the West Side Veteran's Memorial Day Parade.

"I'm honored," he said. "Memorial Day, that's more or less to remember all the ones that made the supreme sacrifice like two of my best friends."

Rishkofski keeps a map of the course he charted with the second infantry division during World War II.

"We traveled with them all through the war," he said.

Rishkofski vividly remembers the day his unit lost two of their own: their first sergeant and staff sergeant.

"They were both killed on Christmas Day, 1944," he said.

They were in Belgium, staying in Elsenborn, where part of the famous Battle of the Bulge would take place. The pair of soldiers were leaving headquarters when a shell struck the building, killing them, Rishkofski said.

He said the rest of the unit was enjoying a turkey dinner with the family that had taken them in when the second lieutenant got a call informing them of what had happened.

"We were having a good time," he said. "All of a sudden, the telephone rings and he said he had to go back to headquarters ... that was a heartbreaker."

Rishkofski will keep the fallen members of his unit in his mind when serving as parade grand marshal this Memorial Day.

He said he wears his hat out and about in the hope of having a chance to talk to people about what soldiers go through.

He wears it when he goes bowling at Chacko's every Monday and when he heads to the lake to go fishing.

"For me Memorial Day it's ... a celebration and then again it's a sad day for me," he said. "You have to remember the ones that paid the supreme sacrifice."

The West Side Veteran's Memorial Day Parade steps off at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, rain or shine, and will follow a route from Kingston corners along Wyoming Avenue to the Forty Fort Cemetery.

5/28/2017

3 displaced after fire in Nanticoke rekindles

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

A fire that broke out at a Nanticoke home on Saturday morning rekindled in the afternoon, displacing three people. The Nanticoke Fire Department was dispatched to the fire at 7:52 a.m. at 131 Orchard St. It started in a second floor bedroom, Fire Captain Mark Boncal said.

"We had the fire under control within 10 to 15 minutes," Boncal said.

The fire rekindled at about 12:30 p.m. as a result of a hot spot. A couple and their daughter were displaced but were not injured, he said. Firefighters also rescued the family's cats and parakeets.

A firefighter Boncal did not identify was taken to a hospital for heat exhaustion.

The fire was ruled accidental and was caused by an electrical malfunction as a result of wiring in the bedroom, Boncal said.

The Hanover Twp. Fire Department assisted Nanticoke firefighters on the scene.

5/25/2017

French Quarter brings Cajun-styled food to Nanticoke

Charlotte L. Jacobson - Citizens Voice

In less than two months, Nanticoke residents welcomed their newest neighbors at the French Quarter restaurant with open arms.

Owner and chef Kelli Fritz worried that opening a restaurant far away from her Berwick home might be a disadvantage to the business, but the locals proved her wrong.

"I know my people (in Berwick) will follow me here to eat, but I don't have many friends up here," she said. "But through word of mouth, we've been busy."

The restaurant hugs the corners of South Walnut and East Union streets, which sat vacant for four years prior.

Customers who enter the establishment are immediately greeted by the scent of Cajun spices and a cozy atmosphere. A menu full of variety sits on the chalkboard wall with different options written in brightly colored chalk, and Mardi Gras-themed decor covers the restaurant in the signature green, purple and gold color scheme.

Fritz said after so many years working for other people she decided it was finally time to open her own restaurant, with her style of food.

"I lived in New Orleans until I was eight, and my uncle had a restaurant down there," Kelli Fritz said. "For years, people told my mom and I to open a New Orleans-styled restaurant, but we'd been busy working for other people, making them money."

In November, an opportunity to lease the restaurant on South Walnut Street presented itself to Kelli Fritz and her husband, Larry, and they couldn't pass it up.

"It was a long time coming," Kelli Fritz said.

But she couldn't do it alone. With help from her family and friends, they opened the restaurant after five months of revamping the interior and decorating it to their liking.

Now, the restaurant specializes in various New Orleans- and Cajun-styled cuisine, from the famous Po'Boys - both hot and cold - to crawfish etouffee and jambalaya. But most notably, the French Quarter serves alligator bites as an appetizer, to really bring something new to the area.

"We allow people to have samples of gator before ordering," Kelli Fritz said. "And 90 percent of people like it."

"It's like a fishy chicken with a steak texture," Larry Fritz added.

Although they are still a budding restaurant, the food spoke for itself when it came to Facebook reviews, which have been mostly five-stars. Kelli Fritz said she fears the day they receive a bad review, but said, "you can't please everyone."

Even with the more unique dishes, the couple said locals keep returning to the restaurant to try new things. Within the few months they've been open, they said many people are repeat customers, from the 911 call center employees that order lunch to the neighbors across the street that eat dinner at the restaurant several times a week. "The best part is meeting all of the new people, from the people across the street to any new customer that walks in daily," Kelli Fritz said.

For now, the restaurant is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but Kelli Fritz said they hope to open Wednesdays after they have some time to get into the swing of the business.

The French Quarter

Location: 701 S. Walnut St., Nanticoke

Cuisine: New Orleans-styled sandwiches and dinner entrees

Owners: Kelli and Larry Fritz

Hours: Monday, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Tuesday/Wednesday: Closed

Thursday: 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Friday: 10:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Saturday: noon to 11 p.m.

Sunday: noon to 8 p.m.

Contact: 570-258-2795 or the French Quarter on Facebook

5/12/2017

Decision means no federal aid for storm cleanup

mmizenko@timesleader.com and jlynott@timesleader.com

Luzerne County municipalities won't be getting any federal money to help offset the cleanup costs from March's record-

breaking snowstorm. The March 14-15 storm dropped more than two feet of snow throughout Luzerne County in a 24-hour span.

Gov. Tom Wolf today announced that President Donald Trump has denied his request for a federal disaster declaration that would have meant federal money to help cover the costs of the storm.

"This disaster declaration would have provided much-needed financial assistance to hard-hit communities in Northeastern Pennsylvania," Wolf said.

Wolf received a letter from Robert J. Fenton, acting administrator for FEMA, which said "the damage from this event was not of such severity and magnitude as to be beyond the capabilities of the commonwealth and affected local governments."

Ted Wampole, city administrator for Wilkes-Barre, took issue with the sentence.

"How they could say that," he said, "defies any kind of logic from anywhere even from Washington."

Hazleton Mayor Jeff Cusat agrees.

"It's a tremendous burden to the city," Cusat said, noting the city submitted close to \$200,000 in receipts. "It's disappointing."

Nanticoke submitted just over \$50,000 for their most expensive two days, interim city Manager Donna Wall said. But still, it will be a hit for the community.

"We're all suffering," she said. The city will have to cut planned projects, Wall noted.

In his request letter sent to the Trump administration on May 2, Wolf cited costs to local municipalities that significantly exceeded their snow removal budgets, transportation issues such as preemptive road closures including major interstates, record-breaking snowfall in nine counties and storm conditions that generated significant life-safety issues requiring a variety of critical resource and support needs, such as rescue and evacuation of stranded motorists, wrecker service with recovery staff, generators and transportation of emergency workers.

The denial may be appealed within 30 days.

"We'll most likely appeal," said Ted Wampole, city administrator for Wilkes-Barre. The city spent approximately \$1 million for the storm cleanup.

Wall, who said she had a "bad feeling" about getting funds refunded, but said she's going to look into getting a group effort together for an appeal.

"Numbers speak volumes," she said.

Cusat said he'll be using his weekend to reach out to other municipalities to see if he can get a "strength in numbers" response.

"If more than one appeals, they will see it's a disaster," he said. "Not just one (municipality) crying wolf."

Wolf made the request earlier this month in order to provide federal funding to local, county and state governments, as well as certain eligible nonprofits in Bradford, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Susquehanna, Wyoming, Northumberland, Pike, Wayne and Montour counties through the Public Assistance program.

The program provides reimbursement of up to 75 percent of the costs incurred on eligible expenses for the eligible 48-hour time period.

5/4/2017

Nanticoke officials: Woman broke her leg jumping out of burning residence

tkellar@timesleader.com

Officials say a woman broke her leg when she jumped out of a window of her residence that was on fire early Thursday morning.

Officials were dispatched at 5:20 a.m. to the residence at 18 Ross St. in the Honey Pot section of the city for a report of a residential structure fire.

Capt. Mark Boncal of the Nanticoke Fire Department said crews arrived to find smoke visible from the front of the structure.

"And there was a good amount of fire," he said.

Boncal said a woman jumped from a rear window to escape the residence, resulting in a broken leg. The woman was transported to a local hospital for treatment of her injuries.

A man was also treated at the scene for minor injuries, and a dog was also rescued from the residence, according to Boncal.

Boncal said the fire was under control and fully extinguished within 20 minutes. He said the structure sustained moderate fire damage, but believed that the structure was salvageable.

The cause of the fire is under investigation by the Pennsylvania State Police fire marshal.

4/28/2017

Nanticoke Area breaks ground for school project

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board had a groundbreaking ceremony to officially kick off the Kennedy Early Childhood Center addition and renovation project.

The project is expected to finished by May 2018, Superintendent Ronald Grevera said.

On March 28, the school board voted to accept project bids with a total cost of \$8.8 million — about \$1.3 million less than bids opened last May.

In December, the board voted to re-bid the project without a project labor agreement, which provided collective bargaining terms for building project workers hired by district contractors and subcontractors and included a preference for Nanticoke Area residents.

4/28/2017

Greater Nanticoke Area youngsters breaks ground for early childhood center

Aimee Dilger - Times Leader

There was a table full of real adult hard hats and big black shovels, and one with toy plastic hard hats and little red shovels. When it came time for some ceremonial groundbreaking outside Kennedy Elementary School in Nanticoke, the little shovels got used first, though Benjamin Wisnosky balked at participating.

As Kennedy Elementary Principal John Gorham called the names of several pre-school and kindergarten students to join in the digging, Benjamin pouted, buried his head in his mother's dress, and slapped the little yellow hard hat away. Fear not, though. As more children stepped to the table to get their gear, Benjamin took to the notion and started lining up with the rest.

Greater Nanticoke Area officially broke ground for the expansion and renovation of the school to create the Kennedy Early Childhood Center. The project is expected to cost about \$8 million, with \$3 million reimbursed by the state. After it's done, K.M. Smith School will be closed and all district students will be taking classes at a single campus along Kosciuszko Street.

During the brief ceremony, Superintendent Ron Grevera said the Kennedy school was among the first elementary schools in the nation named for President John F. Kennedy following his assassination. He also said Kennedy had been a staunch supporter of education as a means to "move people from poverty to prosperity."

By the time the adults were done talking and the kids got to dig into a pile of fresh brown dirt on the lawn outside the front of the school, Benjamin was practically beaming, and like most of the youngsters, didn't stop with a single shovel of dirt.

By comparison, the adults were, well, boring in their posed smiles and scant real shovel action.

The youngsters, who either already attend kindergarten in the district or — like Benjamin — are expected to attend in the expanded school, also got to release red and white balloons into the air.

But the real highlight?

They got to keep the hats and shovels.

4/26/2017

UGI planning gas line projects

Denise Allabaugh - Citizens Voice

UGI will spend more than \$170 million to replace natural gas mains and complete a variety of system enhancement projects, according to company press release.

In Northeast Pennsylvania, infrastructure projects will be completed on North Wyoming, North Vine and East Chestnut streets in Hazleton; **Railroad Street in Nanticoke**; Taylor, North Cameron, Webster and Crown avenues in Scranton; Inman Street in Hanover Township; Walnut Street in Luzerne; and Fourth Street in Nescopeck.

In all, about 64 miles of cast iron and bare steel mains are targeted for replacement. Communities where the projects will occur will receive advanced notification of UGI's construction schedules. For more information, go to

www.ugi.com/construction.

4/24/2017

Nanticoke Historical Society gives citizens 'virtual tour'

pkernan@timesleader.com

With the power of a projector and over 10,000 photos, a few people were able to be transported back into Nanticoke's past, when gas was 30 cents a gallon and Woolworth's was the biggest name in department stores.

On Sunday, interested residents were able to visit the St. Faustina Cultural Center at 38 W. Church St., Nanticoke, to check out a presentation put on by the Nanticoke Historical Society. This was the second such display put on by the society, with the first occurring about a year ago at Nanticoke City Hall.

Dubbing the event a "virtual tour," the society claimed to have somewhere around 10,700 photos of the city of Nanticoke available for viewing. Chester Zaremba, 71, of Nanticoke, the society's vice president and secretary/treasurer, was manning the projector, pulling up various photos.

"We have a few photos that we want to start with," Zaremba said. "From there, we just let the audience dictate what they want to see as the photos start to bring back their memories."

And come back their memories did. Zaremba started with a handful of photos of newspaper ads from Nanticoke businesses — some closed and some still open. But soon, the discussion turned to particular businesses and city buildings from various parts of town, with the crowd calling out what they wanted to see next.

In that way, the display slowly grew to just short of two hours in total run time.

Zaremba also had a special segment organized of before-and-after photos, showing a few buildings around Nanticoke as they look now and how they appeared previously, with years of renovations and changes stripped away. Zaremba told the crowd that these photos would eventually become part of a "then-and-now" style book to be published by the Historical Society.

John Dubik, 65, of Hanover Township, said he came to the event after seeing an ad for it at Gerrity's supermarket. What he likes about events like this is getting the opportunity to see things again that have been long changed or demolished.

"There's all this stuff that you took for granted, and then it suddenly disappeared," Dubik said. "I was young when a lot of it went, so I didn't get to walk around and see it myself, so it's good to see it now."

One of the things that most impressed Dubik about the display was the quick growth in Nanticoke's past.

"They built a high school, and then 20 years later they outgrew it and had to build another one," Dubik marveled.

Donna Henderson, 70, of Nanticoke, was raised in the city but spent about 25 years away. Now, having moved back after retirement, she enjoyed the opportunity to be reminded of her past.

"There are lots of things I forgot, and the visuals serve as a good reminder," Henderson said.

Zambera said that the goal of events like this one is twofold: besides helping people remember the past, they also want to get people involved with the Historical Society.

"We'd like to see some younger people get involved," he said. "There's still so much work left to be done in preserving Nanticoke's history, and we hope someone continues to do it."

4/23/2017

Hanover Area, Nanticoke Area teaming up on field for a good cause

Steve Bennett - Citizens Voice

When Nanticoke Area and Hanover Area had their exhibition baseball game postponed prior to the start of the season, it figured to be just another game lost to poor weather conditions.

But Hanover Area junior Matt Clarke had an idea, and it showed that when times are tough, positive things can come out of the most heated rivalries.

Not long after Nanticoke Area senior Aaron Kreitzer was diagnosed with leukemia in March, Clarke approached Hanover Area coach Mike Zapotoski about playing a game to benefit Kreitzer and his family. Zapotoski called Nanticoke Area coach Joe Yudichak, and Yudichak didn't hesitate.

From there, Nanticoke Area athletic director Ken Bartuska thought it would be a good idea if the softball teams from both schools became involved.

And next Sunday, a doubleheader will be held at Hanover Area with all proceeds from the event going to the Kreitzer family. The Nanticoke Area and Hanover Area softball teams will play at 1, with the baseball teams scheduled to play at 2. Both games are exhibitions.

"He was going to be one of my senior leaders and a starting outfielder," Yudichak said of Kreitzer, who is receiving treatment at Geisinger in Danville. "It is tough to put into words. This never happened to me with a player in 30 years of

coaching. It shook up the whole team. The whole team is battling through it with him.”

The connection between the two schools goes well beyond the rivalry. There are friendships that have been forged, and Aaron’s father, Brian, is a health and physical education teacher at Hanover Area. He teaches alongside Hanover Area softball coach Kathy Healey. And, to take it a step further, Aaron’s cousin, Kyle, is an assistant baseball coach at Hanover Area.

Once Clarke came up with the idea of the game, Kyle Kreitzer took the ball and ran with it, mainly to keep the pressure of putting together something like this off the kids.

“When Kyle asked if the softball team wanted to play, we said we absolutely would,” Healey said. “The Hanover kids love Mr. Kreitzer, and they said they would do anything for him. A lot of our players know Aaron; they definitely want to help.”

The teams sold shirts for the game at a cost of \$15, and the shirts the players will wear are donated by Senator John Yudichak and Joe Yudichak Sr. A limited number will be sold at the games on a first come, first served basis.

“The team brought it up, and I took it upon myself to take charge of it,” Kyle Kreitzer said. “Aaron is my cousin. We are pretty close. I grew up with him; we spend all the holidays together. We would hang out, go over his house swimming and all that.”

Kyle Kreitzer came up with the design for the shirts.

“I wanted to do something simple,” he said. “His jersey number (17) will be on the jersey and the word ‘Fight’ is across the back. Just a way of everyone coming together to fight for him and with him. Everybody will be wearing the number 17.

“Reality kind of sets in and you put all the rivalry stuff behind you. Especially with (Aaron) being a family member. It is nice for both communities to come together. Both communities are connected to him. It is nice we can all come together and have a game for him.”

Pat Revello from Old Forge, another relation to the Kreitzer family, is donating pizza for the event. There is also a contingent from Old Forge that will be traveling by bus to the games. They will be wearing similar shirts to the players — only theirs will be gold. Also, baked goods will be available, and there will be raffles and a 50-50 drawing. There is no admission fee to attend the games, but fans will be asked to donate money for parking.

“It’s a great thing, it shows that two rivals can come together and do something for a kid that is in need right now,” Yudichak said. “It is amazing that (Clarke) could come up with an idea like that. When (Zapotoski) called me to see if I wanted to set something up, I was thrilled. I am happy that the kids care. You see the heart in a lot of people when something like this happens.”

Yudichak said players from Nanticoke Area are constantly in touch with Aaron Kreitzer via text message. The Trojans wear a ribbon on their hat and a patch on their jerseys as a way to honor him.

“I can’t stress enough what a good kid he is,” Yudichak said.

4/20/2017

Taxpayers face expense to reduce Susquehanna River pollutants

jandes@timesleader.com

Municipalities serviced by the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority:

Ashley, Courtdale, Dallas, Dallas Township, Duryea, Edwardsville, Exeter, Forty Fort, Hanover Township, Harveys Lake, Hughestown, Jackson Township, Jenkins Township, Kingston, Kingston Township, Laflin, Larksville, Lehman Township, Luzerne, Nanticoke, Newport Township, Pittston, Pittston Township, Plains Township, Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Pringle, Sugar Notch, Swoyersville, Warrior Run, West Pittston, West Wyoming, Wilkes-Barre, Wilkes-Barre Township, Wyoming and Yatesville.

Property owners in Wilkes-Barre, Pittston, Nanticoke and 33 other Luzerne County municipalities must shoulder the massive expense of an unfunded federal mandate to reduce the amount of sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus deposited into the Susquehanna River from stormwater.

The Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority is pitching a regional approach, saying the 36 municipalities it services for wastewater treatment would spend far more developing and implementing required stormwater plans on their own. This group approach will save even more money if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approves the authority's proposal to make the giant Toby Creek impounding basin off Division Street in Pringle the main component of its pollution reduction plan.

This basin holds water that drains from 30 square miles in the Back Mountain to prevent flooding in Pringle, Kingston and other municipalities on lower ground.

The authority wants to make the path of water more meandering inside the basin to slow it down and reduce the amount of sediment that ends up leaving the basin and ending up in the Susquehanna. Deep-rooted shrubs also would be planted on the basin floor to soak up nitrogen and phosphorus.

These and other details about the proposal were presented to the county Flood Protection Authority this week because the basin is part of the Wyoming Valley Levee system.

According to a two-hour presentation by sanitary authority consultant Herbert, Rowland and Grubic Inc.:

The mandate stems from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay plan requiring states to reduce the amount of nutrients and sediment in waterways that feed into the bay.

In response, the state Department of Environmental Protection is requiring all municipalities that drain water into the Susquehanna to submit stormwater permit plans by September, citing how they will reduce sediment 10 percent, phosphorus by 5 percent and nitrogen by 3 percent over the next five years.

Municipalities face fines if they don't comply with the requirements, which include detailed maps of all stormwater systems and annual progress reports.

If a regional plan is submitted, all participating municipalities will receive credit for meeting sediment and pollutant reduction targets through larger projects outside their municipal borders.

The Toby basin work would satisfy 70 percent of the 10-percent sediment reduction requirement.

Other proposed work in the sanitary authority proposal includes:

- o Pollution reduction alterations in a detention basin near Washington Street in Plymouth along with a "stormwater park" explaining the project, which would satisfy another stormwater public education requirement.
- o Sediment reduction and other enhancements at Abrahams Creek near the county recreational complex in Forty Fort and another water collection area in Hanover Township.
- o Stream restoration along Solomon Creek on the east side of the river.

The total cost of the project would be about \$33 million.

The project expense would be covered by a fee estimated to range from \$3 to \$4.50 per property per month. Nonprofits and other entities that are exempt from real estate taxes would have to pay the fee.

Another monthly fee of up to \$1 per month may be proposed to fund half of the cost pollution reduction projects municipalities want to complete within their borders.

The fee for each property would be based on the estimated percentage of stormwater runoff it generates. For example, the fee would be higher for a lot that is mostly paved, which is considered an "impervious area," because it holds less water when it rains and snows.

Municipalities that want to go solo would have to spend an estimated \$20,000 to \$30,000 to complete the plans and additional costs to implement corrective measures, the consultant said.

The sanitary authority would handle the billing, maintenance of most of the pollution reduction solutions and stormwater system mapping.

The authority estimated its regional approach would save the 36 municipalities a combined 60 percent over the next five years and another 30 percent if Army Corps clearance is granted for the Toby basin work.

Bill Finnegan, the sanitary authority's solicitor, said Wednesday a meeting will be held next week with representatives of the 36 municipalities to present documents they must submit if they want to participate in the regional plan. Public information sessions also are planned, he said.

"The public has to understand this is another unfunded mandate, and either their municipality is going to do it or the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority," Finnegan said. "If the sanitary authority does it, it will be a fraction of the cost." The regional project would mirror the decision of municipalities to band together under the authority umbrella in 1962 for sanitary services, he said.

"We're basically looking to do something similar, but dealing with stormwater mandates," he said. "It would really be a historic project."

After sitting through the flood authority presentation, Kingston resident Brian Shiner said he's frustrated the federal government "pushes it on the back of property owners."

"I understand and accept we have to take care of our natural resources. The problem is it's so easy for these federal agencies to make mandates and not provide the cash to back it up," he said.

Shiner said many property owners will struggle to pay the fee amid other rising expenses. He supports a regional approach but reserved opinion on the proposed plan until he receives more detailed breakdowns on the project costs and administrative expenses.

"It bothers me how rushed this is," he said.

Officials in municipalities outside the sanitary authority coverage area also must develop compliance plans. Most

Luzerne County municipalities are in watersheds that drain into the Susquehanna, which flows over 400 miles from its origin near Cooperstown, New York, and empties into the northern part of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland.

4/19/2017

GNA travel programs broaden horizons

By Madelyn Bugdonovitch, Newspaper In Education student columnist

Citizens Voice

Traveling can open minds, giving a new sense of responsibility and a new sense of self to the traveler. The Greater Nanticoke Area High School gives its students the chance to step outside the mere walls of the classroom and take advantage of opportunities to get out of town, out of state, and even out of the country.

“International travel is so personally enriching; you get to see how other people live and think. As a teacher, it is amazing for me to see students so engaged in such a different environment,” said Linda Kelchner, Spanish teacher at GNA and chaperone for many of the international excursions.

Many opportunities

Through many of its programs, Greater Nanticoke Area affords students the opportunity to experience new places and cultures, to talk with people of other nationalities, to try foods different from that which they are used to, and to really step outside of their comfort zone and explore the world around them. They also get the chance to meet students who are traveling from other areas, and in some cases, to form lifelong friendships. By choosing to travel, students are allowing themselves a chance to grow and change in many positive ways.

For many students at GNA, this is their first time traveling alone without their families. This environment provides a chance to develop essential life skills such as decision-making, self-sufficiency, and money and time management. Studying abroad and traveling internationally can help bring about a sense of independence that is essential for life after high school. These unique opportunities have been offered thanks to teachers who know and understand both the personal and educational value of international travel.

Taking WorldStrides

GNA has teamed up with WorldStrides to educate and make dreams of travel come true.

WorldStrides has more than 50 years of travel experience, taking more than seven million students all over the globe.

WorldStrides is not just a travel company but an actual accredited school. It’s just like other schools, but without the walls. They have a curriculum and an academics department that offers official academic credits to student travelers. Student travelers have the chance to complete online courses regarding the location they have travelled to and the things they experienced while there. By completing these courses, students can earn free high school credits and/or three college credits, truly making the most of their international travel.

Costa Rica trip

Last year, students from GNA traveled to Costa Rica. It was a nature-based trip that included time spent in the rainforest where students observed and studied the bats that inhabit the area. The travelers tested the waters of the Sarapiquí River, ran various experiments, and participated in many exciting activities, such as ziplining through the jungle.

“I watched students grow and begin to take risks. I watched them learn and become willing to try new things. Seeing these children develop, I find, is more rewarding than the trip itself. It was amazing to watch them discover a whole new side to themselves,” said Kelchner.

Everyone who attended this trip experienced something profound and returned with a new perspective and an improved self-confidence. “We had a student who absolutely did not want to zipline and, on the way up inside of the tramcar, he was second guessing his decision. Later on, that particular student was ahead of me. I called out, ‘Hey, are you liking it?’ and his response was, ‘No, I’m loving it!’ This brought tears to my eyes because here was a student who was dead-set on not participating. He took a risk and then had an amazing life-changing experience,” stated Kelchner.

This year, Peru

For the 2016-17 school year, students from GNA will travel to South America and spend 10 days exploring the country of Peru. This is a cultural and historical based trip where students will visit several sights and museums in Lima including the Lima Cathedral, the Plaza de Armas, the Presidential Palace, and the famous Larco Museum, where more than 4,000 years of Peruvian history is showcased.

After sightseeing around the “City of Kings,” students will fly to the Sacred Valley of Cusco, the heart of the ancient Inca Empire. There, they will follow the Inca Trail and visit several historic sites, such as the ancient ruins and temples, and the Inca baths of Tampu Mach’ay. Travelers will participate in a full day excursion to explore Peru’s most famous destination, the Lost City of Machu Picchu, which sits high up in the Andes Mountains. They will also be spending a

few days exploring the Amazon Rainforest. Additionally, unique educational experiences will await them in Peru, where students will be visiting an Incan Tribe to learn about, watch, and participate in one of their ancient rituals to honor and give thanks to Mother Earth. Students will be spending time at a Peruvian School where they will have the opportunity to interact with Peruvian students. These are just a few of the incredible places and exciting things the students at Greater Nanticoke Area will be fortunate enough to experience.

Next year, Iceland

Next year, students will be given the rare opportunity to visit Iceland for an entire week of nature and science based experiences and experiments. Students will find themselves face to face with opportunities to view some of the most amazing sights in the world and can explore Icelandic life and visit numerous museums and villages in and around Reykjavík. Iceland is known as the “Land of Fire and Ice” due to the many volcanoes and glaciers that cover the country.

GNA students will study volcanoes, climb massive glaciers, explore ice caves, observe geysers in action, and hike to breathtaking waterfalls. The trip will conclude with a swim in the Blue Lagoon, a natural geothermal spring. It is sure to be an adventure that students will not soon forget.

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District also offers a variety of travel opportunities within our country as well. Members of the chorus enjoy a trip to New York City every spring where they sightsee and attend a Broadway show. The Marching Band embarks on an annual trip to various locations where the days are filled with fun and interesting events, sights, and activities. In past years the GNA Marching Band has visited Boston, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, New York City, and even ventured across the border to Canada to visit Toronto and Niagara Falls. Seniors at GNA have the chance to visit Washington D.C. with their American Civics classes and also travel to Florida every spring to spend a week in Disney World and at Universal Studios. All of these opportunities provide the students at Greater Nanticoke Area with affordable, once in a lifetime experiences and unforgettable memories they can carry with them throughout their entire lives.

These experiences can undoubtedly help shape the students at Greater Nanticoke Area, giving them a sense of purpose and place in the world, as well as helping them establish lifelong values, priorities, independence, and confidence. “Lessons learned while traveling definitely transfers into students’ lives when they return home as well. I think they gain a lot of patience but, most of all, an opening of their world view,” said Kelchner. The benefits of travel are endless and students can gain invaluable perspective of the enormous and diverse world around them. Former First Lady Michelle Obama summed it up best when she said: “...studying abroad isn’t just an important part of a well-rounded educational experience. It’s also becoming increasingly important for success in the modern global economy. Getting ahead in today’s workplaces isn’t just about the skills you bring from the classroom. It’s also about the experiences you have with the world beyond our borders — with people, and languages, and cultures that are very different from our own.”

Madelyn Bugdonovitch is a sophomore at Greater Nanticoke Area High School. Student columns are published Wednesdays during the school year.

4/15/2017

Procrastinating taxpayers have a little more time

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

When accountant Karen Hazleton is going full bore at work during her busiest time of year, she hangs a sign on her office door that reads, “Tax season in progress. Do not disturb.”

That sign comes down in a few days.

Today’s date usually is tax day, but this year’s deadline for Americans to file their income taxes has been extended to Tuesday, April 18, because federal offices are closed on weekends and Monday is recognized as the Emancipation Day holiday in Washington, D.C.

With the end so near, Hazleton and her staff of nearly a dozen have been hard at work completing tax returns for clients and trying to accommodate those who waited until the last minute, like several who showed up unannounced on Friday. “It’s all hands on deck today,” Hazleton said from her Nanticoke office.

The certified public accountant, who also has offices in Sugarloaf Twp. and Clarks Summit, said she hoped to be done by 8 p.m. Friday so she could enjoy the Easter holiday weekend with family. She said a little break in the action is needed.

“It’s funny. I’ve been working 14-hour days consistently for 115 days,” Hazleton said. “It takes a couple days to adjust.” Those who have yet to file their taxes still have time.

H&R Block, which bills itself as the largest tax preparer in the world, is open every day through Tuesday, including Easter Sunday, the company announced.

“H&R Block offices will be open on Easter, giving taxpayers who haven’t filed their returns an ‘extra’ day of assistance,” the company said.

The regional office for the U.S. Postal Service advised residents to check Tuesday’s final pick-up time for the post office they plan to use to send their taxes.

“Please remember that mail must be deposited before the last collection time at the post office or collection box on April 18 to receive an April 18th postmark,” the postal service said.

Federal prosecutors and the IRS also had warnings for people to make sure they were honest in filling out their taxes.

“During this time of the year, IRS will receive millions of tax returns from honest taxpayers who file their returns on time and pay all the taxes they owe,” said Bruce D. Brandler, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

“Today’s warning is not for them; it is for tax cheats who break tax laws and abuse our tax system. If you belong in this category, pay close attention. My office will hold accountable anyone who participates in a tax fraud scheme that puts an added tax burden on honest taxpayers and drains our public finances.”

IRS Criminal Investigation Acting Special Agent in Charge Gregory Floyd had a similar message.

“With the 2017 tax deadline looming, it is important for people to have confidence that when they pay their taxes, their neighbors and co-workers are doing the same,” Floyd said. “IRS Criminal Investigation will vigorously investigate those individuals who knowingly and willfully evade their tax obligation.”

4/9/2017

Families left to wonder when homicide cases remain unsolved

Sarah Scinto - Citizens Voice

Website designers note: This section is an excerpt from the article in the Citizens Voice on Sunday, 4/9/2017

Reached recently, Attorney Stefanie Salavantis said she could not offer any updates on the progress of that investigation and several other unsolved cases.

They include the unsolved homicide of 97-year-old Gertrude Price.

On Thanksgiving in 2013, Price was home in Nanticoke after spending the day in Dallas with family. In what police have called a random attack, the woman was beaten to death during a home-invasion robbery that night.

Price’s family searched tirelessly for answers after her son-in-law found her dead in her bed the morning after that Thanksgiving.

Local residents pledged more than \$10,000 as a reward for information through a fund at PNC Bank in Nanticoke. Charges have yet to be filed in the case.

Price would have celebrated her 100th birthday in June of last year. Her daughter, Carol Belmont, said she had no doubt Price would have lived to be 100. She said her mother had looked forward to the milestone.

“She was vibrant and full of life,” Belmont said.

As far as Belmont knows, the reward the family offered in 2013 still stands.

“I don’t think it’s enticing anyone,” she worried.

Belmont said she remains in contact with Pennsylvania State Police investigators working on her mother’s case. They call her every three to four months, but rarely have any new information to share.

“I know they’re still active on it,” she said. “That’s what keeps my hope up.”

Belmont and her family remember Price at every holiday — Price would never miss one, Belmont said. She said they’ll think of Price at Easter, remembering how she’d always sit at the head of the table.

Nanticoke Police Chief Thomas Wall said Pennsylvania State Police Trooper Ed Urban has taken over the investigation into Price’s death. Urban did not return a request for comment on the case.

3/31/2017

Nanticoke Area junior aims for archery title

Andrew Watkins - Citizens Voic

Kassie Rinker's decision to take up archery came, more or less, on a whim.

The Nanticoke Area junior asked her father, Jason Rinker, for a bow of her own in September 2014. Kassie said her interest in the sport was born largely from her father's influence. He's an avid archer himself.

But archery has grown to become more than just a hobby for Kassie. In fact, it's a sport that, in less than three years

time, she's proven to be remarkably good at.

The list of championships that Kassie's won during her short time competing is considerable.

After earning a couple of top-three finishes in various tournaments, Kassie took home gold for the first time in the 2015 Pennsylvania State Archery Association's (PSAA) northeast regional outdoor target championships.

It would be the first of several. In 2016, Rinker claimed the PSAA's northeast regional indoor championship, as well as a Pennsylvania Field Archery Association state championship.

Most impressive, though, was her triumph in the PSAA's 2016 indoor state championships. That's a feat Rinker will attempt to repeat this weekend at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center in Harrisburg.

Much of Rinker's preparation comes at Lonesome Road Archery in Taylor, but she's also a familiar face at Archery Zone in Larksville and the Berwick Archery Club.

Rinker did shed some light on how she's preparing for her repeat bid.

"I'm practicing a bit more than usual and making sure my bow is working properly," Rinker said. "I'm making sure my technique is good and my routine is the same for each shot, especially since a few fractions of an inch can mean the difference between another state title or going home empty-handed."

While Rinker's accomplished a great deal in her young archery career, she admits that her successes still surprise her at times.

"You never expect to win so much so soon. I never would have dreamed of being this successful at any point, let alone in my first few years," Rinker said. "It feels incredible. It feels like the practice and hard work has really paid off."

Jason, expressed a similar feeling of surprise at his daughter's early successes. Of course, her accomplishments bring him a feeling of pride as well. Even if they do come with a bit of competitive despair.

"I figured it would be years before she got to the level I am at and I figured there would be years of her trying to beat me when we shoot together," Jason said. "Now, it's the opposite. When we go shooting, I'm the one hoping to have a chance at the better score."

Rinker's also involved in the marching band at Nanticoke Area.

She doesn't hunt, instead saying that the time she gets to spend outdoors with her father is part of what keeps her invested in the sport.

She plans to attend college after high school and said that she'd like to wind up at an institution with an archery team. It seems safe to say that, if she can find that school and that team, it'd be happy to have her.

3/30/2017

Commonwealth Financing Authority approves dozens of grants for county

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

The Commonwealth Financing Authority approved nearly five dozen grants for Luzerne County at its meeting Wednesday.

The authority approved 58 grants ranging from \$20,000 for the rehabilitation of a Veterans of Foreign War building in Wyoming to \$1 million for acquiring and renovating a new corporate headquarters for Berkshire Hathaway GUARD Insurance Companies in Wilkes-Barre.

"The LSA grants remain an integral part of northeastern Pennsylvania's revitalization," said Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, in a press release. "In every corner of Luzerne County, we are investing in infrastructure, public safety and most importantly, in creating good jobs."

Other major projects include \$400,000 for construction on a public works building in Butler Township, \$500,000 for reconstruction of a retaining wall along Solomons Creek in Wilkes-Barre, more than \$478,000 for a Main Street revitalization project in Nanticoke.

You can view the complete listing in the 3/30/2017 of the Citizens Voice.

- o Nanticoke: Nanticoke Main Street Revitalization Project, \$478,198

The Commonwealth Financing Authority also approved projects through its Small Water and Sewer Program. In Luzerne County, those projects included:

- o Nanticoke: City of Nanticoke West Main Street sewer replacement, \$200,000

3/20/2017

Construction work will close Middle Road in Nanticoke, starting in April

mmizenko@timesleader.com

Construction will cause detours and slow-moving traffic in Nanticoke for the foreseeable future. Utility work on Kosciuszko Street will slow traffic this week, and Luzerne County Community College posted on Facebook that Middle Road will be closed to traffic due to construction of a roundabout. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation notified the college that Middle Road will be closed from Kosciuszko Street to the Lower Askam section of Hanover Township as early as April 3, according to the post.

“This is a major part of the South Valley Parkway Project which will eventually connect the college to state Route 29,” the post states.

According to PennDOT, the schedule for road closures is:

- **Middle Road will be closed and a detour will be in place beginning April 3. The road will reopen in November.**
- **Kosciuszko Street will be closed July 6 and be reopened in November.**
- **Prospect Street will be closed in the summer of 2018 and reopen in November 2018.**

PennDOT opened the first of six roundabouts at the intersection of Espy Street and Middle Road on Dec. 2, 2016. When the project is completed, Nanticoke will have three single-lane roundabouts, at Middle Road and Prospect Street, Middle Road and Espy Street, and Middle Road and Kosciuszko Street. Hanover Township will have two single-lane roundabouts and one two-lane roundabout. The two single-lane roundabouts will be at the South Valley Parkway and the northbound on- and off-ramps at the new state Route 29. The parkway and the new state Route 29 south bound on/off ramp will be the two-lane roundabout. In addition to the the delays, PennDOT said routine blasting will occur throughout the area. There is also a single lane closure of state Route 29 for the project. PennDOT advises drivers to use alternate routes.

3/18/2017

Local municipalities hope to recoup some costs from historic snowstorm

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Note: Taken from article in paper concerning Nanticoke, and not the full article.

Nanticoke is in relatively good shape after getting walloped by the storm, according to Mayor Rich Wiaterowski. Crews from the city department of public works as well as private contractors worked around-the-clock for more than 48 hours after the storm, then resumed cleaning city streets at 7 a.m. Friday, Wiaterowski said. Hiring private contractors to help remove snow was essential, but will cost Nanticoke a significant amount of money, Wiaterowski said. On Friday he gave a rough estimate of \$30,000 to \$40,000, but cautioned he did not have figures in front of him to refer to and that the total cost could increase by the time the work is finished. Nanticoke will seek reimbursement for those costs from state and federal emergency management agencies, based on an emergency declaration Wiaterowski issued Tuesday, the mayor said. The city still has a large supply of salt on hand, thanks to relatively mild weather this winter prior to Tuesday's huge storm, Wiaterowski said. Wiaterowski commended the city's police officers, firefighters and public works employees, as well as the private contractors the city hired, for their efforts under extreme circumstances this week.

3/18/2017

Parents blame social media bullying for teen's suicide

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

The parents of a local teenager who killed herself this week in Nanticoke say they believe the girl took her life after being bullied on social media. Nina E. Zendarski, a popular freshman at Greater Nanticoke Area High School, committed suicide at a relative's house Wednesday, her mother Patti said Friday. The 14-year-old Glen Lyon girl's parents addressed the bullying in her obituary, ending the death notice by saying "Social media can be dangerous. Please be kind to one another." Patti Zendarski, 51, said her daughter was a happy kid who gave no warning signs anything was seriously wrong. She

said Nina sometimes mentioned receiving insults online, but nothing that seemed deeply concerning. Zendarski said she has learned much of the social media taunting was done on platforms where the messages erase after being sent.

"Everybody is shocked. My heart is broken and I will never be able to fill that void. This kid was the light of my life," Zendarski said.

Zendarski said she and her husband decided to make their daughter's suicide public to encourage parents to better monitor their children's social media habits.

"If this could save one person, I did my job. I feel like I failed as a mother because I didn't know," Zendarski said.

Zendarski said her daughter was a sweet, kind person who used to like to play sports but has been battling seizures the past few years which caused her to faint frequently. Nina really loved Disney World and the family last went there on a trip in October 2015, she said.

Zendarski provided various photos of Nina, including one from Disney with her wearing Minnie Mouse ears.

"When you see these pictures you will not believe she was this down on herself," Zendarski said.

Zendarski's funeral is slated for Monday at noon at the main site of St. Faustina Parish in Nanticoke. A viewing will be held Sunday from 4 to 7 p.m. at Davis Dinelli Funeral Home, 170 E. Broad St., Nanticoke.

3/17/2017

Nanticoke couple married nearly 60 years pass away a day apart

Citizens Voice

They were born less than a year apart and shared nearly 60 years of marriage.

This week, Joseph and Bertha Brodowicz left this world a day apart.

The 81-year-old residents of Birchwood Nursing and Rehabilitation Center had been in declining health for some time before Bertha Brodowicz passed early Sunday, followed by her husband a day later, family members said Thursday.

Bertha Brodowicz suffered from Alzheimer's disease, and her husband - who had health problems including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease - was heartbroken to see her failing health, said their son, Joseph Brodowicz Jr.

"I think just seeing her fade away, slowly but surely, it gave him no more will to want to move forward," he said.

"He was doing OK, but as she got worse, he got worse," said his wife, Sylvia. "It wasn't very healthy for him to see her the way she was because it did bother him. He was heartbroken."

Born in Nanticoke in April 1935, Joseph Brodowicz Sr. was a factory worker at Penn Footwear and CertainTeed, retiring after a 64-year career. Bertha Brodowicz was born in Scranton in January 1936 and was a factory worker for Penn Footwear as well as American Cigar.

Joseph Brodowicz Jr. described his father as a good man who would go out of his way to help others. He loved fishing and the outdoors - a passion not shared by his wife, who preferred spending time with family and playing bingo, family members said.

"He was by himself a lot. They lived, not separate lives, but she wouldn't go with him - and he was going. He'd go for two weeks, come home for two weeks and take her shopping all over the place," Joseph Brodowicz Jr. said. "She was happy for him to go, and she was happy for him to come home."

But Bertha Brodowicz's deteriorating condition caused her to be placed in the nursing home about a year and a half ago, the family said.

"It just broke his heart that she was there," Sylvia Brodowicz said.

Joseph Brodowicz Sr. had been in and out of the facility a few times, and was back as a resident for his wife's birthday in January, she said. He decided to throw her a birthday party, she said.

"Did she know what was going on? We don't think so, but he still wanted to give her a birthday party," she said.

Then about 1:30 a.m. Sunday, Joseph Brodowicz Jr. got the call that his mother had passed. He went to see her and contacted family members, agreeing to get together Monday morning to break the news to his father.

"We told him and everything, and he just basically closed his eyes," Sylvia Brodowicz said. "A few minutes later he asked, 'What time?' We told him the time and then that was it. He just laid there."

The next morning, the family got another call: Joseph Brodowicz Sr. had passed.

In addition to Joseph Brodowicz Jr. and Sylvia, the couple is survived by son Michael and wife, Marie, of Elmhurst; daughter, Cynthia Dickshinski and husband, Richard, of Nanticoke; five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Friends and family are invited to join the immediate family at 10 a.m. Monday, March 20 for a Memorial Mass in St. Faustina Parish Church, 520 Hanover St., Nanticoke.

3/9/2017

Officials: No bedbug infestation at Nanticoke High School

tkellar@timesleader.com

Officials at the Nanticoke School District say that, despite rumors circulating among parents, there is no bedbug infestation at the high school.

The Times Leader received several tips about a potential infestation at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School. Officials, however, maintain that only a single bedbug was found inside the building.

Building and Grounds Director Frank Grevera said an insect was found in a classroom on Tuesday. It was taken away, and determined to be a bedbug.

An exterminator came to the school at 5 p.m. Tuesday and sprayed the room. Grevera added that as a precaution, desks and all areas within the room were also sprayed.

When asked if there was an infestation, Grevera replied "absolutely not."

"We didn't even see one of them from that point," he said. It was not known how the bedbug made it into the school. "It could have come from absolutely anybody. We have no idea where it came from."

Grevera stressed that bedbugs have not been reported in any other classrooms in the high school.

Rich Colwell, owner of Colwell Termite & Pest Control in Wilkes-Barre, said the sighting of one bedbug is not reason for concern.

"Finding one sporadically and not finding anything else is no reason for concern whatsoever," he said. "It could be a reason to start monitoring, but that would be about it."

In a voice note sent to parents Wednesday, superintendent Ronald Grevera cited posts on social media that have caused "a lot of havoc and problems" at the high school as a result of the incident.

"There is no need for concern, and there is no reason for parents to pull kids out of school this afternoon (Wednesday) contrary to many of the text messages and phone calls they may be getting from students," Grevera said in the note.

Parents called after bed bug found at Nanticoke school

Greater Nanticoke Area Superintendent Ronald Grevera said he issued an automated call to parents Wednesday afternoon explaining there was no reason to be concerned about bed bugs and no reason to pick up students early. One bed bug was found at the high school, and the district closed down the room and sprayed it as a precaution, Grevera said. Rumors of a bed bug infestation were spread on social media Wednesday.

3/4/2017

Portrait of a postman: Nanticoke's Joe Lloyd touched lives for 40-plus years

Daniel Flatley - Times Leader

They hand-deliver information in the internet age and are the only contact some people have with the outside world. They can seem faceless and nameless - blue-suited representatives of an unknowable system.

Or one of them can be your friend.

That often was the case with postal worker Joe Lloyd, 69, of Nanticoke, who was buried in his uniform earlier this winter, a bottle of whiskey at his feet - a gift from a friend on his route.

In November, Lloyd was honored for 45 years of service to the post office. He was known as "the mayor of West Nanticoke" because he saw more of the area each day than most people see in their lifetimes, and he always knew what was happening.

Appropriately, this story started with a letter.

'One of its best'

Fran Spencer was a mail carrier in the Nanticoke Post Office from 1990 until 1996, when she broke her ankle and became a clerk. She retired in 2010. Shortly after learning of Lloyd's death, she emailed a letter to the editor to the Times Leader.

"The United States Postal Service has lost one of its best," the letter began. "I worked with Joe Lloyd for 20 years and never knew a more dedicated, devoted individual."

Lloyd died Jan. 25 at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital. According to his obituary, he was preceded in death by his wife, Irene (Judge) Lloyd, and his infant twin brother, John, and is survived by three siblings: Maryalice James of Edwardsville, John Leo Lloyd of Pittston, and Barbara Walton of Larksville.

"His whole life was the post office," James said. "And it showed. He didn't take care of himself, obviously. He took care of everybody else."

A consistent refrain about her brother from all who knew him was that "he had one foot in the bed, one foot on the floor and his hand on the telephone, ready to answer the call."

"He was definitely dedicated," said Frank Rafalko, the Nanticoke postmaster. "He would be here in like 15 minutes ready to go. He really loved his job."

Rafalko said Lloyd's co-workers began noticing he was losing weight at the start of last summer. In November, around the time he received his award for 45 years of service, he began leaving his route early and missing work, the latter of which had happened only once before, Rafalko noted.

In early January, Lloyd complained of a "bad chest cold" and asked for an ambulance one day while he was home, James said. He was taken to the hospital, where doctors confirmed he had colon cancer. On Jan. 23, he suffered a series of three heart attacks, was resuscitated and put on life support.

Two days later, he was gone.

'Could've been ... anything'

Lloyd did his job and did it well, but more than that, he impacted the people around him, according to those who knew him best.

We make so much of accomplishment and success in life that those who don't aspire to fame and wealth are said to live "ordinary lives." We forget that to be human is to be given opportunities to be kind, to nourish life, to make another's burden easier to bear.

If you peel back the layers, you discover some interesting things about Joe Lloyd.

He was born in Kingston and went to Larksville High School, where he excelled in football and basketball and made the honor roll. One story recounts that, after games, he liked his shower water so cold that others didn't go near him for fear of being hit by the chilly spray.

When Joe was 14, his mother died, leaving him and his sister Maryalice in charge of their younger siblings. Their alcoholic father was physically present but functionally unavailable, according to Walton, his sister.

"The old man wasn't around too much," John Lloyd said. "(Joe) was an all-scholastic basketball player his junior year and couldn't even go out for the team his senior year because he had to go out and get a job because he had to support us."

John said his brother "could've been a doctor, a lawyer, or anything."

Joe could have gone to college but instead stayed behind to help take care of the family before enlisting in the Army.

After he left the military he joined the post office.

During his first two years on the job, in Hazleton, Lloyd delivered mail to the home of Jack Palance, the actor known for his portrayals of cowboys, gangsters, vampires and Curly Washburn from the "City Slickers" movie series. Famously, Palance dropped down and did a set of one-handed push-ups on stage when he won the 1992 Oscar for best supporting actor.

He was 73 at the time.

"He did say he was a nice guy, down to earth," James said of her brother's interactions with Palance.

Lloyd cared for his wife, Irene, during a protracted illness and for his mother-in-law in recent years, something his sister said was further evidence of his patience and selflessness.

The creed

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night," goes the unofficial motto of the U.S. Postal Service, taken from the James A. Farley Post Office on Eighth Avenue in Manhattan, a nod to the mail carrier's unwavering consistency.

The quote, which was translated for the building, comes from an account of the Persian Wars by the Greek historian Herodotus. The Persians operated a system of mounted couriers on horseback, a basic concept that continues today. Despite the advent of modern vehicles and high-tech sorting machines, people still carry the mail, often on foot.

Karen Mazurkiewicz has worked for the Postal Service for 30 years, most recently as the public relations officer for Central Pennsylvania. She said the mail carrier's job has changed in subtle ways over the past 10 or 15 years.

Today, sorting mail takes much less time with the help of machines. As a result, carriers spend more time on their routes, especially delivering packages - a part of the job that has increased exponentially with the growth of online retailers.

"The boom in packages means that carriers have taken on a lot more physically than even 10 years ago," Mazurkiewicz said.

Postal workers can "bid" on routes based on their seniority. The longer a carrier has been in the service, the more options he or she has. Some routes are easier than others. But some postal carriers elect to stay on the same routes for virtually their entire careers. When that happens, those carriers become a part of their communities.

"Wedding, funerals, birthdays, anniversaries, they get invited to these events," Mazurkiewicz said. "They become not

just a public servant but a part of your life."

After his two years in Hazleton, Lloyd delivered mail in Nanticoke for 40 years, including the final 30 years of his life in West Nanticoke. His military service counted for three years of postal work.

The comments section of Lloyd's obituary is filled with stories about his interaction with customers, including memories of him sitting on the steps and talking with them, as well as his requests for pumpkin cookies at the holidays.

Many of Lloyd's friends and acquaintances described him as a George Bailey-type figure from the film "It's a Wonderful Life." The only difference is that Lloyd never complained about staying in his hometown, according to Walton.

"I didn't realize it was to that extent until the funeral," she said. "These people were crying their eyes out like he was family. I didn't even know who my mailman was."

Spencer, the woman who wrote the letter to the Times Leader about Lloyd, said their relationship began rather inauspiciously. Lloyd was known as a jokester and often would tease Spencer, especially in his early days on the job. But after she saw how dedicated he was to his profession, she grew to appreciate his consistency and to understand his sense of humor.

"He knew how to get under people's skin, but you could set your clock by him," she said. "I really came to admire that." His consistency was outdone only by his humanity.

According to his sister Maryalice, Joe would ring a customer's doorbell if he was delivering medicine; he wanted his folks to know immediately that the potentially life-saving package was there.

The great beyond

Judith Nowak is a former nurse and grief counselor. She and her husband, Edward, reside in the same development where Joe Lloyd lived. She is responsible for the bottle of whiskey in his casket.

There's a story behind that, too.

Lloyd began delivering mail to Nowak's family on East Grove Street while she was in nursing school. On the morning of her wedding, Lloyd brought the results from her state board examination. He continued to deliver mail to the Nowaks through all 44 years of their marriage, until this past Christmas, when he didn't show up for his appointed rounds.

Several years ago, Nowak began a tradition of giving Lloyd a present for Christmas, often a bottle of wine or liquor. She already had purchased his latest gift when she found out he had passed away. She asked Lloyd's sisters if she could leave the bottle with him.

Nowak said it brings her comfort to know that Lloyd is holding it in the great beyond, a party favor for whomever he meets there.

"They'll say, 'Hey, Joe brought the good stuff,'" she said.

2/21/2017

Two displaced after fire ravaged apartment building in Nanticoke

tkellar@timesleader.com

Two people were displaced as a result of a fire that ravaged an apartment building Monday night.

Crews were dispatched to the building on East Broad Street at 9:25 p.m. for a report of a commercial structure fire. Fire Chief Kevin Hazleton said the building is part of Birchwood Rehabilitation and Nursing Center and housed up to 4 apartments.

Hazleton said crews arrived to find fire blowing out of the rear and side of the structure.

"It was blowing, but the (fire) members made a good hit on it," he said.

The apartment where the fire originated sustained heavy fire damage, and the rest of the building sustained smoke damage, according to Hazleton. Only two people were living in the building.

No injuries or pet deaths were reported. Hazleton said a Pennsylvania State Police Fire Marshal is expected to look into what caused the blaze.

2/19/2017

Downtown Jolt

Denise Allabaugh - Citizens Voice

He's taking a shot on downtown Nanticoke.

Edward Rodriguez, 32, the former general manager at Johnny Rockets at Mohegan Sun Pocono in Plains Township, has opened Cool Beanz, his first business, at 71 E. Main St.

The bistro features specialty brewed coffee and tea, smoothies, breakfast and lunch fare, including panini sandwiches,

hot dogs, salads, soups and sweets like pies, muffins, cookies and cupcakes.

Rodriguez, who has worked in the food industry since he was 15, said starting his own business was something he always wanted to do.

"It is a risk, but I needed to take it to see if I can succeed," he said. "If I didn't take the risk, I would never know and I would regret it. I took a big risk, something that I never did before, and I'm putting all my chips in it and hopefully it pays off in the long run for me and my family."

When he was looking for a place to open his new business, he stumbled on the location in Nanticoke, the former Coffee's Coffee owned by Kim Coffee.

It is located across from Luzerne County Community College's Health Sciences Building and Geisinger's family practice facility and near Weis Market.

"There are a lot of students here," Rodriguez said. "There's the doctor's office and there are patients here and people from the supermarket."

Several vacant storefronts are located next to Cool Beanz, but there are plans to revitalize downtown buildings in the future as part of a streetscape project, said Interim City Manager Donna Wall.

A sewer project was recently completed and a new water main will be put in the downtown area, Wall said. New street lights are planned in the future and Nanticoke received a \$5.6 million federal grant for the project, she said.

"Overall, I think there's a lot of progress that will be made downtown," Wall said. "Anybody who wants to get on board and bring businesses here, the city welcomes them here."

Rodriguez said he hopes to see other vacant buildings in Nanticoke filled.

"I'm hoping to see other stores and different things to bring more of the community out," he said. "I hope they revitalize downtown and a lot more foot traffic comes by. Without customers, I won't be open."

Cool Beanz

The eatery is open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Delivery is offered 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For information, call 570-258-2315.

2/13/2017

Nanticoke saves \$2,000 by tax bill switch

mmizenko@timesleader.com

The city is saving over \$2,000 by switching to a private sector company to print and mail tax bills, officials say. The decisions to switch to Berkheimer Tax Office was brought before and agreed on by council in May 2016. The official start date was Jan. 15, 2017.

Jennifer Polito, the city's finance director, said the city is saving \$2,104 by having Berkheimer mail real estate tax bills.

"Berkheimer is doing it for less," said Donna Wall, the interim city manager. Previous Times Leader reports show Berkheimer's \$2.25 rate per bill and \$1.25 reminder mailings saves the city 25 cents per bill.

"We are getting same services that the county was giving for less," Polito said.

Wall also said the county wouldn't separate out municipal tax from the county tax when they billed residents.

"We separated it to make it easier for the taxpayers to pay since they are now separated and due at different times," Wall noted.

School taxes, also handled by Berkheimer, are mailed in August while the city taxes are mailed in March. The county's tax will be issued in February.

The city didn't raise taxes in 2017. Mayor Richard Wiaterowski's budget kept the millage rate at 5.93. A mill is a \$1 tax for every \$1,000 of assessed value. The breakdown of millage includes general purpose millage at 4.75, debt services at 1.15 and .0194 for the Mill Memorial Library.

Hazleton is the only other county municipality which issues a separate city tax bill.

2/11/2017

Nanticoke native bestowed Congressional award posthumously

boboyle@timesleader.com

A Nanticoke native has been posthumously honored for his service with the Civil Air Patrol during World War II.

Louis Testaguzza, who died on Sept. 18, 2015, was presented a certificate of Special Congressional Recognition on Nov. 15, 2016. He was 87.

The certificate reads:

“In recognition of the Congressional Gold Medal Award for invaluable contributions in the United States Civil Air Patrol during World War II, when they forged the path the organization and its volunteers still follow today.” Testaguzza’s sister, Julie Golanoski, of Nanticoke, said she was very happy that her brother received such a prestigious honor.

“It’s belated, but he finally was recognized for his service,” Golanoski said. “I’m very proud of my brother. He started his aeronautical career as a teenager — even before he drove a car, he was flying an airplane.”

Golanoski said Testaguzza and his two friends joined the Civil Air Patrol, calling themselves “The Three Musketeers.” “His loyalty was always strong to his home town of Nanticoke,” Golanoski said. “We grew up on West Church Street, where I live now.”

According to the Civil Air Patrol’s California Wing, after two attempts to get the Congressional Gold Medal awarded to the Civil Air Patrol World War II era veterans, the medal was finally authorized by Congress and President Barack Obama in May 2014 and the medal awarded on Dec. 10, 2014.

The CAP said while over a replica hundred medals have been awarded to date, the organization continues to search for living members and the families of deceased members who are eligible for the award to ensure they are recognized for their service.

One such recipient was the family of Testaguzza, who served as a cadet in the Pennsylvania Wing during World War II, attached to the Wilkes-Barre Squadron, near Scranton.

Testaguzza soloed in a Piper J-3 Cub at 17 years of age and then enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps seven days after graduating from Nanticoke High School, and he served as an aircraft mechanic.

In 1949, he was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps, but later joined the California Air National Guard and was commissioned a second lieutenant after completing flight training and earning his pilot’s wings from the U.S. Air Force in 1953, where he flew P-51 Mustangs and F-86 Sabre jets.

Testaguzza graduated from Northrop University in 1955 with a degree in aeronautical engineering and began his civilian career in the burgeoning California aerospace industry, eventually landing at Lockheed. In 1962, 2d Lt.

Testaguzza was recalled to active duty during the Cuban Missile Crisis and was later promoted to the grade of major and placed in command of the 938th Communication Squadron.

He was again recalled to active duty in 1968 during the USS Pueblo crisis. In 1969, Maj. Testaguzza retired from the Air Force after more than 22 years of active and reserve service.

Testaguzza continued to work at Lockheed while attending law school at night and after graduation, was admitted to the California State Bar, Federal District Court and U.S. Supreme Court. He retired from Lockheed in 1989 with over 30 years of service, but remained active as an aviation consultant for McDonnell Douglas.

Testaguzza remained active in aviation and became a certified flight examiner in 1988 at the age of 60 and continued to give check flights until the age of 85. Testaguzza passed away at the age of 87 on Sept. 18, 2015 in Palo Alto, California.

The Congressional Gold Medal was presented to Testaguzza’s widow, Marlene, and his son, Brett, at John J. Montgomery Memorial Squadron 36 in San Jose by California Wing Commander Col. Alan Ferguson and assisted by Squadron 36 Commander, Capt. Steven Angus. More than 60 CAP members were in attendance.

Testaguzza was born in Nanticoke to Italian immigrants Dominic and Mary Testaguzza. His father worked in the coal mines and his mother ran a boarding house.

Testaguzza’s obituary noted that he “lived his life to the fullest,” and he always said “Life is not a rehearsal, live it up!”

Civil Air Patrol California Wing Commander Col. Alan Ferguson presented the Congressional Gold Medal of Maj. Louis Testaguzza, a native of Nanticoke, to his widow, Marlene, and his son, Brett, during a ceremony on Nov. 15, 2016, in California.

About the Civil Air Patrol

The numbers alone tell a story of heroic sacrifice: At least 59 CAP members were killed in the performance of their missions, with nearly half – 26 – dying during the coastal patrols. Those patrols alone accounted for 86,685 missions involving 244,600 flight hours and more than 24 million aerial miles.

CAP was founded Dec. 1, 1941, a week before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The coastal patrols began within three months, after the Petroleum Industry War Council requested protection for oil tankers falling prey to German torpedoes. Over the next 15 months, members used their own planes to watch for U-boats, sometimes dropping bombs when they spotted one of the submarines.

The Congressional Gold Medal marks the first major recognition CAP’s members have received for their World War II service. Fewer than 100 are believed to be alive today.

2/5/2017

Nanticoke family crazy about Patriots

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

The Felici family of Nanticoke keeps their Christmas tree up every year until the New England Patriots football season is over.

They like when it's still up in February, like this year. That means their favorite team made the Super Bowl again. Over the years, the family's Christmas tree shed traditional ornaments to become what it is today — a shrine to the Patriots. This year's tree — a white pine with lots of red, white and blue flair — has held up remarkably well as the Patriots prepare today to play in their seventh Super Bowl in 16 years.

"This is the best one we've had. We've had ones where all the needles fell off and it was like a stick," Kelly Felici, 39, said.

Her husband, Pete, 39, convinced her to become a Patriots fan when they started dating in the 1990s. She was a Raiders fan who converted at the right time. Soon after she made the switch, the Patriots developed into a dynasty under head Coach Bill Belichick and star quarterback Tom Brady.

Some accuse her of "jumping on the bandwagon" of a winner.

"I get called it. He's not. He's an original," she said.

But Pete Felici said he's not immune to the taunts when people see him decked out in Patriots attire. He recalls a particular time about a decade ago when an elderly man was giving him a hard time at a gas station after seeing him in his Patriots jacket.

"He's like, 'Did you just jump on the bandwagon?' I said, 'I've been a fan for as long as I could remember,'" Pete Felici recalled.

Pete Felici said he became a fan as a kid while visiting relatives in Connecticut. It was cold out and they got him a New England Patriots sweatshirt. Ever since then, he has been rooting for the Patriots.

After converting his wife, they have been to about 15 Patriots games over the years in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

Their daughters, Lexy, 13, and Brook, 10, are backers of the Patriots too.

Even they get teased by classmates about supporting the mighty Patriots, they said.

"They always bring up 'Deflategate,'" Lexy said, referring to accusations New England deliberately underinflated footballs used for their offense to suit Brady's preference.

All this ribbing — most of it good-hearted — comes with the territory for backing a team that has been on top of the game so long, the family says.

Over the years, Pete Felici said he's tried not to brag about how good his team has been, but his buddies love to tease him when they falter.

"Especially with all the Steelers and Eagles fans," he said.

Pete Felici said it has been a great time to be a Patriots fan because he realizes the team "isn't going to be great forever."

"It's been a great run. The Belichick-Brady combination, they have it figured out," Peter Felici said.

2/3/2017

Family fearful with man's alleged killer still at large

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

As Tina Letavish laid on her living room couch in the early morning hours of Jan. 18, she watched her son walk out the front door to meet someone.

Almost immediately, she heard a scuffle erupt. A flurry of gunshots followed.

"I got up from the couch. By the time I got to the door Brandon was coming back to the door saying someone shot him. It was like two seconds," Letavish recalled Thursday. "He was running back and forth in the house screaming that he didn't want to die. I replay it every day all day in my head. All I see is my son begging for his life."

Smith, 20, died a short time later at the hospital from multiple gunshot wounds.

More than two weeks later, the man police identified as the killer, convicted drug dealer Antoine McNeal, remains at large.

Letavish said her family - which includes her husband and Smith's three younger siblings - is fearful with the killer still on the loose. It adds to the unease of having to live in their apartment at 185 W. Church St. where Smith took some of his last breaths, she said.

"I really wish they would catch the guy," Letavish said.

Nanticoke police Chief Tom Wall said the U.S. Marshals Service is hunting for McNeal, who was last known to live in Wilkes-Barre.

Wall wouldn't reveal how McNeal, 32, was identified as the suspect, but confirmed drugs had something to do with the crime.

"There was drug activity involved, but the motive is unclear at this time," Wall said.

Smith's sister, Destiny Crooks, said her brother used marijuana for anxiety, but never dabbled with other drugs.

Letavish, 47, said Smith, one of her nine children, didn't tell her a lot about his personal business and she didn't ask a lot of questions. She said he was a kind, good kid who never got in trouble.

Unlike the suspect, Smith had no criminal history, according to a search of court records.

Smith and McNeal knew each other from working at Kappa Graphics in Hughestown, though Smith hadn't worked there for months, his mother said. A company official declined comment.

"We have family friends that worked there. They had told us this guy was watching Brandon and was envious of Brandon. They would tell Brandon, 'Don't trust him.' Brandon didn't trust this kid. He was warned about him," Letavish said.

What baffles Letavish is how the suspect ended up outside their house. She said Smith was very private and didn't let a lot of people know where they lived.

"I can't believe Brandon would let him near our house," she said.

In the aftermath of Smith's death, Letavish said the family was disheartened to hear people online assume he was adopted because he was the only black person in the family.

"It really hurt me to read that he was a foster child. He was my son - my biological son and I never raised my children to think they were 'step' anything. We are a very close family," Letavish said.

Another misconception, she said, were erroneous reports that her family was a longtime neighborhood nuisance. She said they had just moved there in November and had caused no trouble.

Letavish moved her family to Pennsylvania from Binghamton, New York, about 10 years ago.

They lived in the Tunkhannock area for a while before moving to Nanticoke. They moved to Ohio for a short time, then returned to Nanticoke.

"We have a lot of friends here," Letavish said.

Smith initially went to Tunkhannock Area schools, but later was moved to the Alternative Learning Center in Plains Township for some disciplinary reasons, his mother said.

After dropping out of school, Smith worked as a garbage picker for J.P. Mascaro & Sons, which was also the first job for several of her older sons who now live on their own.

"I gave him a lot of credit for that. He stuck it out," Letavish said.

Smith was injured on the job and had to quit after he hit his head off a utility pole one day during trash pickups, Letavish said.

Most recently, Smith was looking to return to school, his mother said. Instead of planning to help him in his next chapter in life, they had to plan for a funeral they couldn't afford, she said.

Smith's family has sent up a fund online to pay for the \$2,000 they still owe in funeral costs. To donate, go to www.gofundme.com/3boa8v4.

On Sunday, they will be thinking of Smith a lot as his beloved New England Patriots play in the Super Bowl.

"We are all rooting for the Patriots for Brandon," Letavish said.

HUNT FOR SUSPECT

Authorities continue to search for Nanticoke homicide suspect Antoine McNeal, 32, last known to live in Wilkes-Barre. Anyone with information about McNeal's whereabouts is asked to call state police at Wyoming at 570-697-2000.

DONATE TO FUNERAL COSTS

The family of Nanticoke homicide victim Brandon Smith, 20, is trying to raise money to pay for \$2,000 they still owe in funeral costs.

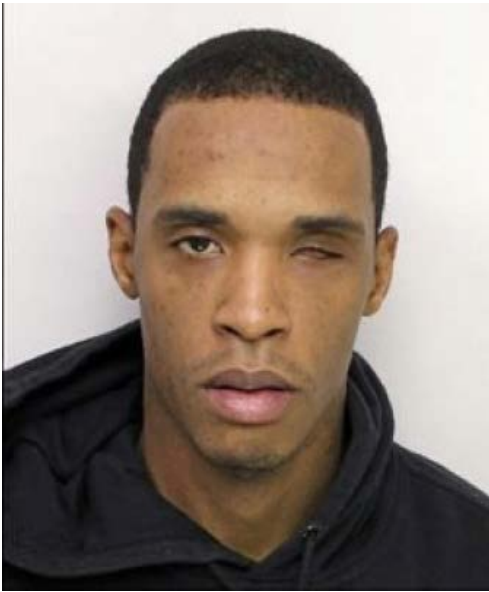
To donate, go to www.gofundme.com/3boa8v4.

1/20/2017

Suspect named in Nanticoke murder

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

Police have named a suspect in the murder of a Nanticoke man early Wednesday morning.



Antoine McNeal, 32, of Wilkes-Barre, shot and killed 20-year-old Brandon Smith outside Smith's home on West Church Street in Nanticoke at 2 a.m. Wednesday, police allege.

Police obtained an arrest warrant against McNeal on Thursday. He had not been located as of Thursday night and is considered armed and dangerous, police said. According to police, Smith and McNeal got into an altercation that resulted in McNeal shooting Smith several times.

An autopsy conducted Thursday morning determined that Smith died of multiple gunshot wounds inflicted during a homicide, according to the Luzerne County Coroner's Office.

McNeal faces charges of homicide, illegal weapons possession, criminal use of a communication facility and evidence tampering, according to court records.

Anyone with information about McNeal or his whereabouts is asked to call state police at Wyoming at 570-697-2000.

1/18/2018

Neighbors question safety after Nanticoke fatal shooting

jhalpin@citizensvoice.com

Gunshots rang out on the west side early Wednesday, leaving one man dead and some neighbors questioning their safety in an era of absentee landlords.

The victim, Brandon Smith, 20, was shot repeatedly outside a home at 185 W. Church St. about 2 a.m. following an altercation with a person with whom he appeared to be acquainted, according to state police.

"We do believe that it's possible that it can be (drug) related, but right now all of the evidence isn't in," said Nanticoke police Chief Thomas Wall, whose department is jointly investigating the slaying with state police. "We have some leads but we don't have anybody in custody at this time."

Witnesses reported hearing gunshots break the early morning quiet in an area that has had recent problems.

"I heard two, possibly three, gunshots," said a witness who did not want to be identified for her safety. "And then about two seconds later I heard the guy scream."

Police rushed to the scene and arrived to find Smith outside the home, suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. He was taken to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Plains Township, where he was pronounced dead about 3 a.m., according to the Luzerne County Coroner's Office.

An autopsy is planned for Thursday morning.

Smith did not appear to have a criminal history in Pennsylvania based on the birth date state police provided.

But neighbors of the home where he died say the location was known as a troubled property.

Desiree Deitz, 35, said the tenants — Smith, a woman and a young girl — have only lived at the property a few months but have already earned a reputation for disrupting the peace.

"They're constantly fighting, they got their window smashed out a couple weeks ago," Deitz said.

The house has seen high turnover in recent years, as has another nearby property she said has been causing problems with drugs.

Deitz blamed the neighborhood's problems on absentee landlords who only care about collecting the rent.

"That's the problem in this town. The absentee landlords, they don't care. They rent to whoever and then we are affected," Deitz said. "It's sad because I'm trying to raise a family. They're trying to raise a family. Our neighbors have been here for years. Our friend across the street, she lives there alone. She's lived there her whole life. It's terrifying. It really is terrifying. I don't like to come home and see police crime-scene tape down the street from my house."

The shooting caused police to close West Church Street down for hours as they processed the crime scene. By Wednesday afternoon, the street had been re-opened to traffic.

While a reporter was on the scene, state police investigators returned to look for evidence that was mentioned in an interview, Wall said.

“Right now, we’re just doing some interviews and following up on some leads that we have,” he said.

The shooting is the second Nanticoke has experienced in recent weeks.

Kenneth Powell, 30, was shot in the back after allegedly confronting an unidentified man who broke into his East Spring Street home the morning of Dec. 8.

Powell and his girlfriend, Courtney Padden, 26, were presented with felony drug-trafficking charges after police say they found a large bag of marijuana, drug packaging materials and nearly \$13,000 in cash inside the home.

Smith’s death is the second homicide of the year for Luzerne County following the Jan. 11 slaying of Brock Earnest, 40, of Montandon. Keith Williams, 40, is charged with criminal homicide after prosecutors say he shot Earnest, who was sitting on a couch, following a fight between the men at Williams’ home in Fairmount Township.

1/18/2017

SCI-Retreat forum focuses on safety

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

A public forum Tuesday on the potential closure of State Correctional Institution at Retreat focused on the potential danger to corrections officers and inmates.

Don Williams takes that issue personally. His son, Eric Williams, was killed in the line of duty as a corrections officer at U.S. Penitentiary-Canaan in Wayne County in 2013.

On Tuesday, Don Williams led the forum at Luzerne County Community College devoted to keeping SCI-Retreat open. He implored Gov. Tom Wolf not to close SCI-Retreat — Newport Township’s largest employer — or other state prisons as a cost-cutting measure.

The state Department of Corrections on Jan. 6 issued a list of five state prisons, including SCI-Retreat, two of which could be closed to cut expenses from the state budget.

Closing prisons and moving inmates to other correctional institutions with empty beds would put more corrections officers and inmates at closer quarters — where bad things can happen, Williams said.

“We’ve established there is going to be overcrowding,” he said. “It’s a formula for disaster.”

Williams noted that when his son was killed by an inmate wielding a home-made weapon, three things stood out: He was alone, he was unarmed and the prison was overcrowded.

The greater the number of inmates a corrections officer must supervise, the greater the chance of an inmate attack on an officer, according to Williams, who is president of Voices of Joe, an advocacy group that lobbies for improved working conditions and safety for corrections officers.

“Altering the staff ratio by 1 percent will increase assaults by 30 percent,” said Shane Fausey, vice president of Voices of Joe.

Fausey asked the many corrections officers in attendance if they had ever been attacked by an inmate. More than a dozen hands instantly shot up into the air.

“What do you think the end result will be?” if state prisons fill to capacity or beyond, Fausey asked.

Fausey and Williams questioned whether closing state prisons would save as much money as Wolf projected — or even save anything at all, after the final accounting is done.

All it would take is one riot for the prison consolidation plan to wind up costing more than it saves, Fausey said.

He cited the days-long riot at Camp Hill state prison in 1989 as a bad precedent. It cost \$14 million to repair the damage and clean up after the disturbance, he said.

“That’s a far cry from the pennies they are going to save by closing prisons,” Fausey said.

There could be a societal cost as well, Williams said. If prison populations reach or exceed maximum, parole boards might release some inmates early to ease overcrowding, he said.

“One of my biggest fears is they are going to release people into society with no plan for how to deal with them,” Williams said.

Prison consolidation and overcrowding would impact the many inmates who require mental health treatment, according to Tuesday’s panel — which included state Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-Newport Township, state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, Luzerne County District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis and county Manager David Pedri.

“How many of these inmates are going to get this treatment, which we are required to give them”? Salavantis asked.

Williams suggested that denying inmates mental health treatment could be cause for federal authorities to intervene.

The panel unanimously supported Yudichak’s call for Wolf to delay making a decision on closing prisons. As of now that decision is scheduled for Jan. 26, with the affected prisons to close by June 30.

“This has been driven by the budget, not driven by safety,” Yudichak said.

1/14/2017

Officials: SCI-Retreat closure would devastate Nanticoke area

emark@citizensvoice.com

It will be bad news for [Greater Nanticoke Area School District](#) if State Correctional Institution at Retreat closes as part of a state prison consolidation.

That was the message hammered home at a Friday press conference by state lawmakers, district officials and corrections officers who work at SCI-Retreat, which houses 1,100 inmates and employs more than 400 workers on the prison grounds off U.S. Route 11 in Newport Township.

The closure of SCI-Retreat, and possibly SCI-Waymart in Wayne County or SCI-Frackville in Schuylkill County, would have “a devastating impact” on the economy of Northeastern Pennsylvania and especially communities in the Greater Nanticoke Area, said state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township.

The three prisons are on a list of five state correctional institutions targeted for possible closure as a cost-cutting measure, the state Department of Corrections announced last week.

Gov. Tom Wolf has said he wants to focus on education rather than prisons, Yudichak said.

The senator, speaking in a conference room at his alma mater, Nanticoke High School, described that concept as a false choice.

“Life is not that simple,” Yudichak said. “Crime still exists. Drugs remain a problem.”

Taxpayers should not be forced to choose between safe streets and quality schools, Yudichak said.

Yudichak and state Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-Newport Township, on Friday continued their week-long rally in support of SCI-Retreat, noting that Wolf and state Secretary of Corrections John Wetzel overestimate the cost savings that closing prisons would realize.

According to Yudichak and Mullery:

- SCI-Retreat is the second-largest employer in Greater Nanticoke Area, behind only Luzerne County Community College.
- If the prison closes, the school district would lose about 90 families and 200 students, resulting in a loss of about \$100,000 in tax revenue.
- The losses could force district officials to cut programs and services, such as a pre-kindergarten program that district Superintendent Ronald Grevera said the district would like to expand rather than eliminate.
- About 350 SCI-Retreat employees live in Luzerne County, so most school districts in the county would be impacted if the prison closes.

“I am not sure how we would overcome the loss of revenue,” Grevera said.

Four corrections officers at SCI-Retreat, all fathers of children who attend district schools, sat next to the officials gathered at the conference table.

The men and their families face harrowing uncertainty about their future, said Mark Truszkowski of the PA State Corrections Officers Association.

The Department of Corrections has guaranteed jobs somewhere in the state to corrections officers who currently work at prisons that will close, but that will require officers to either relocate or commute long distances, Truszkowski said.

That will affect the officers’ children and families, according to Truszkowski.

“We are hurting the developmental stages of these children,” he said.

Mullery questioned the timetable established by Wolf to decide which prisons will close.

That decision will be made on Jan. 26, Wetzel said last week.

There is no magic to (that) date,” Mullery said.

He and Yudichak urged the governor to extend the deadline and make decisions on potentially closing prisons as part of the state budgeting process, which will last throughout the first half of 2017.

“All we are asking is to extend the deadline,” Yudichak said.

The fight to keep SCI-Retreat open will continue for the 12 days until that deadline arrives.

The state House of Representatives Northeast Delegation will send a letter to Wolf “expressing dismay” at the governor’s plan to close prisons, Mullery said.

The letter will urge Wolf to delay the decision until public hearings are held, at which those affected by potential prison closings may testify, according to Mullery.

Also, busloads of corrections officers plan to attend a hearing in Harrisburg on Jan. 23, at which three Senate committees will review the plan to potentially close state prisons, according to Truszkowski.

“We are going to pack the place,” he said.

1/14/2017

Yudichak, Mullery say closing SCI Retreat would hurt education at GNA

boboyle@timesleader.com

State Sen. John Yudichak said Friday if Gov. Tom Wolf cares more about schools than prisons, he should consider the adverse impact closing the State Correctional Institute at Retreat would have on the quality of education in the Greater Nanticoke Area School District.

Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, and state Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-Newport Township, held another news conference on the governor’s plan to close two state prisons — this time, the two legislators were at their alma mater, the district’s high school. SCI Retreat is on a list of five state prisons from which two are scheduled to be chosen for closure on Jan. 26.

Yudichak and Mullery and other state legislators have been asking the governor and Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel to extend the deadline to allow for more time to gather information, such as the economic impact any closing would have on the host communities.

“Gov. Wolf wants to invest in schools, not prisons, but that is a false choice,” Yudichak said. “Pennsylvania’s taxpayers want to invest in both. Closing SCI-Retreat will jeopardize \$1.6 million in funding for the Nanticoke School District and threatens important educational programs like Pre-K instruction.”

Joining Yudichak and Mullery were Dr. Ronald Grevera, superintendent of the Greater Nanticoke Area School District, district school board members, and five members of the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association who work at SCI Retreat and whose children attend school in the district.

“A closure of SCI-Retreat means we could lose 90 families and more than 200 students,” Grevera said. “We cannot absorb such a staggering exodus of families and students, as well as the second largest employer within the district.” It is simple math — if the prison closes, secure funding for our schools will be undermined.”

Yudichak and Mullery stressed that the prison is integral to the entire community, both as an employer and as an important part of the criminal justice system.

“The 139 heroin overdoses in Luzerne County demonstrates that drug abuse remains a problem in the county and crime remains an issue in our community,” Yudichak said.

Mullery said no one knows “when the dominoes will stop falling” if the governor closes prisons prematurely.

“I have yet to hear a compelling reason why this decision needs to be made on Jan. 26, let alone a compelling reason to target three prisons in Northeastern Pennsylvania,” Mullery said.

Yudichak said closing SCI Retreat would result in a loss of \$100,000 in tax revenue to the school district. He said the pre-K program at Nanticoke costs approximately \$190,000 per year. He said the loss of revenue would not only have an immediate effect on the program, it could be lost.

Grevera said any cuts to the pre-K program would have a significant, measurable negative effect on the quality of education in the district. He said elementary students have been found to be better at reading and math because of the pre-K program.

“We should be expanding our pre-K program, not cutting it,” Grevera said. “With a potential loss of \$1.6 million in funding, I’m not sure how we would ever recover from that.”

The DOC and Wolf Administration has been holding meetings to determine the economic impact closing a prison would mean to each of the five possible areas. Yudichak and Mullery have estimated closing SCI Retreat would see a \$57.3 million hit to the region’s economy.

The legislators have asked that Wolf delay a decision on prison closings and resume budget talks, with the hope that enough cuts can be found to avoid significant measures, such as closing two prisons. Some 2,500 inmates would have to be relocated and about 800 employees reassigned if two prisons are shut down.

Yudichak cited Northeastern Pennsylvania’s 6.3 percent unemployment rate, stating that closing SCI Retreat would see that number rise significantly.

Yudichak and Mullery said they feel state legislators have been shut out of the decision-making process.

“These are tax dollars,” Yudichak said. “We should be a part of this process.”

Mullery said there are some 2,000 to 2,500 state inmates currently housed in county correctional facilities. He said those inmates, if returned to state facilities, would eliminate the need to close prisons.

“If this is a numbers issue, as Secretary Wetzel has stated, then that would resolve that,” Yudichak said. “There has also been talk of the state accepting federal inmates. We will have a new president on Jan. 20. We should allow for more time to see if that agreement can be reached.”

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Nanticoke police chief responds to criticism of department

mmizenko@timesleader.com

A discussion about illegally parked commercial vehicles during Wednesday's city council meeting caused police Chief Tom Wall to question if some city residents have negative attitudes.

"It's been brought to my attention that nothing happens in Nanticoke." Wall said during the meeting. "Have you read the papers lately?"

Wall said some of the complaints aired at council meetings are "very minuscule" on the police scale and pointed to the number of heroin deaths in the county - 140 in 2016 - as an example of one of the problems his department is forced to face.

Wall did reassure citizens that anything called in to him or the police department will be addressed, but, in some instances, it may be low on the police's radar.

He was answering complaints from John Telencho and Lou Gianuzzi about illegally parked commercial vehicles.

"I know this isn't the most important thing in the world," Gianuzzi said. "But there has to be something flowing."

Gianuzzi is upset that tractor-trailers park on conservation land near the bridge connecting Nanticoke with Plymouth Township. It wasn't the first time Gianuzzi has complained about the trucks. Minutes from as early as June show him questioning interim City Manager Donna Wall about them.

"You don't know what they're hauling," Gianuzzi said, claiming they could be hauling explosives or dirty soil.

Solicitor William Finnegan said he had tried to make contact with the owners of the land to buy the parcel because it sits next to a larger property the city owns. Finnegan said he's reached out "twice in writing and once by phone" to the owner, who has yet to respond.

"It's a grey area," the police chief said about citing the owner of the property.

"It's private property. We don't own it," Donna said.

Gianuzzi was also concerned with the loss of a \$40,000 contract between the police department and Warrior Run to patrol the borough. Finance Director Jennifer Polito said the appropriate revisions to the department's budget have been made.

"We did pull the \$40,000 from the budget. ... We're going to hopefully try to increase revenue in the police department," Polito said.

The next council meeting will be held 7 p.m. Jan. 18 in council chambers, 15 E. Ridge St.