

24 Dallas students suspended 3 days

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

A fight which grew from a shoving match between two boys arguing over a girl resulted in the suspension of 24 Dallas High School students, including four football players and five girls.

Involving about 34 young people from the Back Mountain and Forty Fort, the fight erupted on the playground at Westmoreland School October 19, around 7:30 p.m.

According to assistant superintendent of schools Dr. Gilbert Griffiths, the fight involved two separate incidents.

"The first fight was between a Dallas football player and another Dallas boy, who had a boy from New York fight in his place," Griffiths said. "It had been arranged ahead of time and a large group of students came to watch."

After the boys involved in the first fight left the playground, a second fight among the students who had congregated broke out and the police were called, Griffiths said.

Griffiths said that high school principal Frank Galicki interviewed 38 young people, ages 14-20, during his investigation of the incident. Several of the young people involved were students at West Side Tech, young adults and former students. One boy was from Forty Fort, Griffiths said.

The 24 Dallas students involved were suspended for three days, October 25-27, were charged with loitering on school property and weren't allowed to participate in sports practices or other school activities, he said.

Students may make up missed classwork or tests at their teachers' discretion, but the teachers

are allowed to give them zeroes for the missed time, he said.

The three-day suspension was the maximum punishment allowed for a first-time offense by the district's discipline policy, Griffiths said.

If the same students are involved in another fight, they'll be punished more severely, he added.

If the suspensions had included a weekend, the athletes wouldn't have been allowed to play in any scheduled games, he said.

"We had to consider the gravity of the situation," Griffiths said. "This could have evolved into a major melee on school grounds after dusk. We tried to make the discipline fair and consistent."

As far as the administration knows, the fight wasn't the result of gang activity, he said. A large number of students knew about the fight and came to watch, but it wasn't gang-related.

"We're trying to prevent future incidents like this," Griffiths said. "We're setting up programs for students and parents about school violence and gangs, and also plan to start a parent support group. This has been done in other districts. We want to let the parents know that we're concerned."

According to Kingston Township police chief James Balavage, his investigation of the incident is complete, with 20 students receiving summary citations for disorderly conduct and one boy, accused of possession of drugs after police found four grams of marijuana in his car, petitioned to Luzerne County Juvenile Court.

Although police confiscated two knives, two cans of red pepper spray, two baseball bats and a small box of .22-caliber bullets, they did not find any guns, Balavage said.



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

SERIOUS ACCIDENT - Larry Lambert of Exeter was seriously injured when his pickup truck rolled over several times after colliding with a car on Route 415 in Dallas.

Accident leaves driver in critical condition

Lehman Township police and the Pennsylvania State Police are investigating a two-vehicle accident that occurred shortly after 4 p.m. October 28, closing Route 415 near the Harveys Lake/Dallas Township line for about two hours.

Police said a GMC pickup truck driven by Larry Lambert of Exeter, and a Pontiac LeMans operated by Kathryn Kelata of Trucksville were traveling north on the highway when they collided.

The truck rolled over several

times, throwing Lambert from the vehicle and coming to rest in the woods on the southbound side of Route 415.

Lambert was taken by helicopter to CMC in Scranton, where he was listed in critical condition in the intensive care unit. Police said he suffered a broken neck, broken back and fractured skull in the accident. Police said he was not wearing a seat belt.

Kelata was not injured; police said she was wearing a seat belt.

St. Therese's opens free clinic, soup kitchen

St. Therese's Church and the Hands Healing Hearts Foundation has announced the opening of a "free" medical clinic and soup kitchen at St. Therese's Church in the Back Mountain.

The clinic and kitchen will operate in Father Sammon's Hall of St. Therese's on Pioneer Avenue on the first and third Fridays of each month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Transportation can be arranged for those requiring it.

November's sessions will be Friday, Nov. 4 and Friday, Nov. 18. A special Thanksgiving session has been added on Friday, Nov. 25.

For further information about the program or to make arrangements for transportation contact Dr. Mark or Karen Perlmuter at 696-0936.

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Published Wednesdays
675-5211
FAX: 675-3650

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612
Shipping Address: 45 Main Road, Dallas PA 18612
Office hours: Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

NEWS

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The Dallas Post (USPS 147-720)

Published weekly by Bartsen Media, Inc. \$18 per year in Luzerne and Wyoming counties (PA); \$20 elsewhere in PA, NY or NJ; \$22 all other states. Second-class postage paid at Dallas PA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612.

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