

Parents, teachers hope to keep Westmoreland open

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

KINGSTON TOWNSHIP - It's been home to students for 60 years, but many Dallas school district residents have never heard of it.

The Westmoreland Elementary School, the district's last neighborhood school, began life in the mid-1930's as the old Kingston Township High School, becoming an elementary building when the present district was formed.

Plans for its future will be discussed May 15 at 6 p.m., when the school board's property committee meets with five architects May 15 to discuss the district's development plan, which some parents fear could include eventually closing Westmoreland.

According to principal Sam Barbose, the building houses 475 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, with three classrooms per grade. Two eight-year-old modular buildings on the playground are used for a computer lab and a classroom.

But a building doesn't necessarily make a school, according to parents and some of the school's 19 teachers.

"It's the chemistry, they say. You can put up all the new facilities you want, but you can't create the goodwill and caring of the students and teachers for one another," said PTO newsletter editor Nancy Daney. "Parents and teachers work closely together to help the students."

In many senses Westmoreland is like a large family, she added. Students are there for six years, allowing teachers, principal Sam Barbose, nonprofessional staff - even the crossing guards - to get to know them very well.

"We have a family atmosphere here that would be hard to find in a larger school."

Beverly Hetro
PTO secretary

"By the time a child is in the middle of first grade, all the teachers know him, his parents and his brothers and sisters," Daney said.

She doesn't mind her children attending classes in an older building, which has fewer modern amenities than the newer schools. It's a small price to pay for being part of a close-knit community, she said.

"They even kept track of my last pregnancy," laughed Chris Tucker. "I know my children are in good hands here."

"Spirit's a good way to describe Westmoreland," said hospitality and bake sale chairman Karen Williams. "My little girl is very proud that she's going to the same school as her daddy and grandpa. I've only been here two years, but it feels like family."

PTO treasurer Karen Kyle believes a smaller school provides a better atmosphere for learning and discipline. Students who act up can't get lost in the crowd here, she said.

Visitors won't find graffiti on the walls or playground, broken windows or an impersonal atmosphere.

Hallways are lined with cheery displays of students' work, which they often compliment one another on. A prominently posted monarch butterfly reserve graces the front lawn.

Kids proudly wear their gray



WESTMORELAND PROUD - Third-grader Marty Murray and fourth-graders Alyse Taddei and Raelynn Walter show off the special shirts that promote Westmoreland School spirit.

POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

and blue Westmoreland sweat-shirts.

"Children this young would be lost in a larger school," said PTO secretary Beverly Hetro. "I know - I went to one and don't remember many of my classmates. Our teachers didn't know us as persons."

PTO president Sue Baiamonte spends so much time in the building that the children say hello to her in the halls.

"We have a family atmosphere

here that would be hard to find in a larger school," she said.

PTO members volunteer countless hours each year to provide enrichment programs, field trips, computer programs and other extras which the district otherwise couldn't afford for the students.

They collect Campbell's soup labels and UPC (bar codes) from Kodak, L&F and Hershey's products to exchange for educational

items such as computer programs.

A monthly newsletter keeps parents informed on PTO activities, special class projects and other interesting tidbits of daily happenings in classes provided by willing teachers.

PTO members even painted a cheery mural in the cafeteria.

Their hard work is their contribution to their children's education, the four R's - reading, writing, arithmetic and responsibility.

"I love this school."
Leslie Baltimore
PTO field trip chairman

"We work hard together to prepare the children to move on to the next grade, the next level," Daney said, complimenting principal Sam Barbose for his excellent guidance.

Mary Grace Jones, a 25-year veteran teacher who is now teaching her first students' children, described the school as having "fantastic spirit."

"We're so comfortable together because we've been together as a faculty for so long," she said. "Many of my colleagues feel the same way. I guess we feel a bit spoiled. We'll lose this feeling in a larger building."

Chapter I teacher Rita Mundy describes Westmoreland as "a community unto itself - students, parents, teachers, the principal and friends in the neighborhood."

"I'm studying for my doctorate at Temple University, and all the research I've read says the most successful schools are like ours," she said. "It's foolish to lose what everyone else in the country wants."

PTO vice-president Maggie VanKuyk said she would be "disheartened" if the district closed the building. "Visitors are welcome here any time," she said. "You can ask the teachers anything at all, or just stop in and say hello."

Field trip chairman Leslie Baltimore easily summed up her fellow members' feelings.

"I love this school," she said.

Contested local political races

These local races are contested in the May 16 municipal primary.

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS (1 seat)

- * Timothy Dymond (R)
- * Michael J. Prokopchak (R)
- * Martin W. Murray (D)

HARVEYS LAKE BOROUGH COUNCIL (3 seats)

- * Martin Noon (D)
- * Elizabeth J. West (D)
- * Isla Spock (D)
- * Joseph Miscavage (R)
- * Thomas J. Callahan (R)
- * Ruth Eaton (R)
- * Christopher Hinton (R)

LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL DISTRICT: All candidates have filed on both parties' tickets.

Region I (Harveys Lake, Lake Township, Noxen) (2 seats)

- * Edwin R. Kern, III
- * Elizabeth Sichler
- * Lois Kopcho

Region II (Ross and the middle and southwestern districts of Lehman Township) (1 seat)

- * Rosemary Howard
- * Dr. Martin McMahon
- * Thomas E. Williams

Region III (Jackson Township and Lehman Township's northwest district) (1 two-year seat and 1 four-year seat)

- * Karen M. Whipple
- * Michael Warner
- * David R. Kaufman

* Incumbents

Corrections

An article about Lake-Lehman school board candidates last week contained incorrect information.

In Region I, composed of Harveys Lake, Lake and Noxen townships, Edwin Kern, Elizabeth Sichler and Lois Kopcha are running for two seats.

In Region II, composed of Ross Township, Lake Silkworth and Lehman Township's middle and southwest districts, the team of incumbent Thomas E. Williams and former board member Dr. Martin McMahon are running against Rosemary Howard for two open seats.

In Region III, composed of Jackson Township and the northwest district of Lehman Township, Karen Whipple, David Kaufman and Michael Warner are contending for two seats.

Also, Warner's statement about teachers' salaries should have read: "By the 1996-97 school year the average teacher's total compensation (salary and benefits) will be more than \$66,000 per year, while the average wage in Luzerne County is only \$19,500 annually."

Election Day lunch at Truckville UM church

An Election Day lunch will be served by the United Methodist Women of the Truckville United Methodist Church on May 16, from noon until 4 p.m. in the Education Building, Church Road, Truckville.

The menu will include pork Bar-B-Q, hot dogs, homemade beef (and vegetarian) vegetable soup, homemade rice pudding, coffee, tea and soda.

There will be a bake sale table, with Welsh cookies for sale at \$2.25 per dozen. The soup can also be ordered for takeout at \$1.25 per pint and \$2.50 per quart.

Orders can be placed for soup and cookies by calling the church office 696-3897 daily from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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