

Druggists

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know their drug histories, they are on our computer.

"This is a first-name trusting business. Now these same people, who can call us for free delivery, are being forced to deal with large and distant firms whose only service philosophy is based on their bottom profit line."

Plavis says, "The past year's closings mean that millions of consumers have lost their local pharmacy and millions more are being forced to take prescriptions to pharmacies not of their own choosing. Worse, they are directed to use mail-order companies which are miles away, and who may not comply with safety regulations our Commonwealth enacted."

"There goes your personal attention," Plavis adds. "Don't think for one minute a mail-order giant's customer service desk will answer your questions. They don't even know who you are."

At the Medicine Shoppe pharmacy in Dallas Shopping Center, Trucksville's Gary Karwaski is a rally booster, and is optimistic to boot. He says, "It's a start. It's about time we let people know we are in danger of going from the best pharmacy system in the world to a mediocre system at best."

Gary is a former CVS District Manager and says, "That was OK, and they are in the same boat, but this is better. And I think people will fight the city-hall-type mentality telling them what they can or can't do. They will also be willing to pay a little extra for quality care

and service as opposed to second-rate."

Trucksville Pharmacy's Neil Billek, a 15-year veteran, adds his thoughts: "We are often asked, in person and on the phone, questions about dosages and the like. With or without meals? Any side effects? What about generic? We answer these and many other questions all the time, and we don't mind. It's part of our service. Customers are going to lose all that if they are forced to deal miles away. Generics, incidentally, are not all they are cracked up to be. They can change color, or size, without notice. Will the mail-order desks explain about that? I don't think so."

Billek also points to the growing trend of pharmacy counters being added to supermarkets. "One more worry," he says. "They admit profit is not a goal; the idea is to get people into the store."

On the ballots being distributed by local, county and national pharmacy organizations members are three check points for their customers: 1) To attend the rally at their local pharmacy at 12 p.m. on September 20, 2) To let their family and friends know the precarious situation neighborhood pharmacies are in, and 3) To tell their employers they want insurance coverage that provides high quality and allows freedom of choice.

Worthy goals, many would say. It was bad enough to lose the soda fountain at the corner drugstore. It would be disastrous to lose the store itself.



Bob Fino actively supports next week's "High Noon" rally day to save neighborhood pharmacies from the insurance industry giants. Bob and Ruth Fino live on Center Hill Road, and are the parents of three: Leanne, 27, who helps out in the Dallas store; Dominic, Jr., 25, a Wilkes Student and Michael, 23, a pharmacy student in Philadelphia. Fino has been in the pharmacy business 33 years.

More traffic lights likely to wait until spring

By **JOHN SANSEVERE**
Post Correspondent

LEHMAN - The Back Mountain Transportation Management Association was told Sept. 7 that work on traffic signals along routes 309 and 415 will probably not take place until spring.

Intersections at Franklin Street and Center Street in Shavertown, and Main Street and Center Hill Road in Dallas, will be widened and new or upgraded lights will be installed.

"Most of the work will take place in the spring," said Bob Hassel project manager for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

Bidding for the projects will start on October 5 and will take 45-60 days to make sure all legal requirements are met.

Fabricating the signals for the intersections will take another 45 days, and will be done over the winter for work to resume in March, according to Hassel.

Funding for the project comes 80 percent from the federal government and 20 percent from the state. The \$2.5 million budget is part of a 12-year master plan which is broken down into four-year segments.

Transportation plans will be updated statewide in the first two weeks of November by the state transportation commission. Part of the review will examine cost overruns on the projects on Route 309, Route 118, Route 415 and the intersections.

"The five intersections pushed the cost above the original project money available," said Ron Bacchi, traffic engineer for PennDOT.

Fair Queen runner-up

Marina Knappman of Trucksville, a junior at Dallas High School, was voted first runner-up in the Luzerne County Fair Queen contest Saturday. She's the daughter of Richard and Marlene Knappman.



POST PHOTO/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Banks

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longer hours demand desirable in part by the supermarket location.

"People have to get used to supermarket banking," said Pioneer American president Donald Hoyle. "We've been very pleased with the results."

The Mr. Z's branch employs six full and part-time persons, and has longer Saturday hours, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., in addition to being open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays. While there's no drive-up window or safe deposit boxes, Hoyle says the branch offers every other service available at free-standing offices.

Hoyle said Pioneer considered building a separate office, but likes to open supermarket offices where possible because of the savings. He said the bank can open six market offices for the same cost as building one free-standing branch. At the end of this year the bank will have 18 branches, eight of them in supermarkets.

The Back Mountain has a total of about \$200 million in deposits in all bank branches, Hoyle said, making it an attractive area for expansion.

Existing banks haven't left well enough alone, either. Expanded hours, new services, and branch relocations have been common. When PNC took over First Eastern in 1994, it merged its office near the Country Club Shopping Center into the First Eastern branch at the intersection of Routes 309 and 415. The result is a very busy office that the bank is now thinking about expanding. The branch employs 16, and is probably the largest in the Back Mountain.

"One of the attractive features of the branch is it covers a broad spectrum of business," said Carl Lisman, executive vice president in charge of consumer banking at PNC. The branch performed exceptionally well in a recent promotion to attract new accounts from persons 50 years and older,

and is "one of the best" for consumer loans, Lisman said.

It will probably be one of the best for ATM, or "MAC" machine transactions once a new model is installed later this year. Lisman said the new "advanced function ATM" will be the first of its kind in the region, with added features such as the ability to cash checks to the penny.

The former PNC branch "from a PNC standpoint, wasn't that active," Lisman said.

From Franklin First Savings Bank's perspective, the old PNC office is just fine. Franklin First moved into the building in June, after several years in the Dallas Shopping Center. Having an ATM at all is a move up for the office, as well as drive-up windows, safe deposit boxes and a night deposit, all of which were unavailable in the cramped former quarters.

And it's paying off, said Frank Ferencick, manager, pointing out that the branch, which is eight

times the size of the old office, was just named branch of the quarter. "When PNC left, they left a void," Ferencick said, which he is trying to fill.

Richard Mebane, executive vice president of Franklin First, described the old office as "woefully inadequate," especially considering the bank's growth. "Across the board, things are growing," in the Back Mountain, Mebane said. While deposits and mortgages have been increasing at the bank's two Back Mountain branches — the other is in Shavertown — the addition of trust services and a new emphasis on business banking require more space and personnel.

Franklin First now employs about eight persons at each branch.

Mebane thinks the spurt in banking offices here could simply be coincidence, that perhaps several banks simply saw the opportunities here at the same

time. "It's an indication of what the banking industry thinks is happening in the Back Mountain."

Mellon Bank has maintained an office in Dallas for several years, one which was retained when Mellon took over United Penn Bank. Even that office has been affected by the changes, recently adding Saturday morning hours.

And First Fidelity, which took over the former Merchants Bank offices in Shavertown and Dallas, continues to operate both offices. And First Valley Bank, which is the former Hanover Bank, runs a thriving office along Route 309 in Dallas.

More to come

More expansion is on the way. Grange National Bank, headquartered in Tunkhannock, hopes to open by November, 1996 in the retail complex that is slated for the former "Duke" Isaacs auto dealership property in Trucksville. Tom McCullough, the bank's president, says he has signed a letter of intent and made a deposit on space in the first of three buildings that will be constructed there, and is negotiating a lease. He's pleased that a traffic light will be installed at the entrance because that will make the branch "very safe and very accessible."

Grange National had purchased a lot on Route 309 next between Mountinside Manor and the former Coscia's Restaurant, but decided the Trucksville location held more opportunity. McCullough feels the mergers of large banks has created an opportunity for smaller ones, as some customers inevitably become unhappy with the changes.

With six branches including one in Bowman's Creek, Grange National has total assets of about \$88 million, which, McCullough says, is large enough to meet depositors' needs but still small enough to provide personal service.

FIRST VALLEY BANK
SATURDAY BANKING
PNC BANK

Newspaper collection in Lake Twp. Sept. 16

Newspaper will be collected at the Lake Township Drop Off Center on Route 29 on Saturday, Sept. 16 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Paper should be packed in paper bags and all glossy inserts removed.

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