

Nat'l Utilities

(continued from page 1)

tion, the Office of Small Business Advocate filed a notice of intervention.

"All the charges against the company are unwarranted," said Bontrager. He said there haven't been many complaints in the last four to five months. When asked about a leak in the front yard of an Oak Hill home, Bontrager replied that NUI will probably repair it this weekend. "Things are running fairly smoothly," he said.

NUI filed for the increase to take place last January, but the PUC suspended it for investigation. Paist held public input hearings in Dallas, Factoryville, Mount Pocono and Germansville. She said that the customers throughout NUI's three divisions have been subjected to such hassles as frequent outages and low pressure, frequent boil-water advisories and water with unpleasant taste, odor and appearance, excessive lead levels, sediment and high chlorine content.

Also, "there has been a significant failure on the part of NUI to provide water that is fit for all household purposes such as...drinking, washing, bathing and cooking."

Joseph C. Pagoda, an Oak Hill resident who filed a formal complaint against NUI, is happy with the decision, but realizes the chance of the company appealing. "If they file an appeal, I will file a reply because people still have problems around here," he said. Many of the customers wouldn't mind a reasonable rate increase if the service was worth it, he said.

Judge Richard M. Lovenwirth issued a decision Nov. 8 fining National Utilities, \$2,000. The judgement was the result of the formal complaint filed by Pagoda on April 4, 1995. Pagoda's report was very detailed and included a great deal of input from his neighbors.

According to many residents of the Oak Hill subdivision, NUI has been providing inconsistent and poor service for 12 years. Some of the allegations in Pagoda's complaint include inadequate and sporadic water pressure, a parcel of real estate owned by NUI was an "eyesore," repairs to water mains kept rupturing due to inadequate temporary "patchwork" repairs, failure to properly fill pave cuts and not informing public about boiling advisories.

Wyoming Valley West Class of '77 to meet

The Wyoming Valley West Class of 1977 has set its 20th reunion for July 5, 1997 at the East Mountain Inn. Reunion committee members are seeking information about classmates' addresses. Anyone with information should contact Katie Scouton Youells at 675-0138, Douglas Roberts at 654-6287, Susan Matley Hritzak at sueh@coloonel.csc.wilkes.edu or Les Nicholas at nickjojo@aol.com. Members of the reunion committee include Back Mountain residents, Toni Roccogranti Madden, treasurer; Cary Lawrence, Sharon Bloshinski Lawrence; Katie Scouton Youells.

Odd Fellows hold officers' installation

Odd Fellows Lodge Osage #712 of Lehman, held their installation Nov. 6. The following officers were installed by the White Haven Lodge, Noble Grand, Glenn Johnson, Vice Grand, Allan Fox, treasurer, Jack Tribbler, secretary, Tom Rodgers.

Recently the Lady Toby Rebekah Lodge #514 of Lehman held their installation, the following officers were installed, Noble Grand, Mary Gregory, Vice Grand, Marian Stroud, secretary, Rebecca Gray, Treasurer, Ruth Johnson. They were installed by their

District Deputy President Mary Shaver. Afterwards a social time was enjoyed by all.

Lady Toby Rebekah Lodge #514 and Odd Fellows Lodge Osage #712 of Lehman recently held a hot dog and soup get together at Marian and Dick Strouds of Sweet Valley. Twenty five members attended and enjoyed the home-made soup and dessert.

Lady Toby Rebekah Lodge #514 of Lehman met at the Odd Fellows Lodge in Lehman to make Thanksgiving decorations for the Maple Hill Nursing Home in Lehman.

"All the charges against the company are unwarranted. Things are running fairly smoothly."

Joe Bontrager
President, National Utilities

According to Douglas Ide, Lehman Twp. supervisor, the board is trying to pass stricter road occupancy ordinances to force the company to properly finish its repair work.

During the hearing, many people testified against NUI. "I couldn't have gotten that judgement without my neighbors," said Pagoda. "Through the efforts of us all we got something done."

Although the \$2,000 fine was an appreciated victory, some feel the judgement should have had a more direct benefit for the people of Oak Hill. "I don't think the fine is enough," said Scott Shuster who has lived in Oak Hill of more than 20 years. "We shouldn't have to pay our bills until the water and service is acceptable."

"The fine isn't even a slap on the wrist, they've done more than that much damage to Oak Hill," said Ide.

Barbara and Tony Hoyson, of Oak Hill, who after calling NUI all summer finally got them to come to their house on Nov. 12 to fix a leak, have been left with a mound of dirt in their front yard. "Normally they put the dirt on the street, but they put it all in our yard instead," said Barbara Hoyson who has lived in the neighborhood her whole life. "Instead of

being fined they should be forced to replace the water main," she said. The Hoysons have had approximately 35 main breaks in 12 years, she said.

The Hoysons testified at the hearing that resulted in Judge Lovenwirth's decision and are very angry and frustrated by the company's response. "No matter what, they don't do anything," said Hoyson, whose family doesn't drink the water from the faucet. When they called the president of NUI, Joe Bontrager, they were told that the leak would be taken care of "soon" said a waiting Hoyson. The lawn had not been repaired on Nov. 25.

Also, the Hoysons claim NUI is costing them in more ways than the monthly bill and lawn repair. "Within the last year, \$400 worth of our clothes have been ruined because of too much chlorine in the water," said Hoyson. She is worried about the value of their property. "Who wants to buy a house with problems like these?"

Many of the neighbors are considering digging their own wells. But, until that happens, they will continue to file complaints as long as NUI provides less than acceptable service.

The PUC is concerned with the business practices displayed by NUI. It filed a \$5.1 million complaint against NUI for 40 violations with fines totalling an excess of \$5.1 million on March 20. The case is still pending.

As of yet nothing is permanent. NUI has the opportunity to file appeals to all charges and the neighbors vow to continue their struggle for competent water service. "We've been fighting too long to let it go," said Hoyson.

Students

(continued from page 1)

Adams volunteered in the hospice unit of the Veterans Memorial Hospital where her neighbor, Shirley Smith, RN works. She volunteered for nine to 10 hours a day for four weeks.

"I learned to deal with stress, death and the families who lose loved ones," said Adams. She helped the nurses by filing, getting prescriptions and answering

the phones. "I did any little things I could do to help the nurses out because they were so busy," she said.

Adams was surprised when the school principal, Anthony Martinelli, called her down to the office to inform her of the award. "I thought I was in trouble," said Adams laughing. She believes the benefits of volunteer work not only

help the people, also the volunteer.

"Lyndsay has a big heart. She melts when she sees kids."

Joe Santarelli
Father of award winner



POST PHOTO: KYLIE SHAFFER/KOETTER

Student volunteers Lyndsay Santarelli, left, and Kelly Adams flanked Prudential representative Jane Nickalls at a ceremony honoring the pair. Standing, from left, Michael Shevock, guidance counselor; Joe Santarelli; Marie Santarelli; Gwyneth Adams; Anthony Martinelli, Dallas Middle School principal.

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