

# Parent/teacher meetings dropped

By KYLIE SHAFFERKOEETTER  
Post staff

DALLAS - There may not be parent/teacher conferences this year at Dallas High School. The closing of the school for seven days due to the mercury spill has created scheduling problems. For now, there is no room in the revised schedule for the conferences. William Wagner, president of the Dallas Education Association, thinks it's a shame to cut out such an important element of education. "It's sad to see that those meetings will not exist the year," he said. "With the block scheduling there is just no extra time left." Dr. Gilbert Griffiths, assistant

*"This is not the most productive makeup time"*

William Wagner  
Teachers' union president

superintendent, said that scheduling the conferences is still under consideration. "We have to talk with the president of the union, sit down and make a schedule for it," he said.

Wagner said many teachers were upset with the decision to have makeup classes during previously scheduled holidays, and the tenured faculty members

asked the school board to extend the school year rather than use holidays to make up the lost days.

Wagner submitted a letter to the school board last week stating the association's feelings against makeup days during scheduled holidays. "This is not the most productive makeup time" said Wagner. "Kids just don't want to be here."

The high school showed low attendance over the Thanksgiving holiday, when two makeup days were scheduled. On Fri. Nov. 29, 457 of the students were absent and Mon. Dec. 2, 272 of the 757 enrolled were absent.

Other makeup days are Dec. 27 and 30 and Feb. 17 and 24.



POST PHOTO/KYLIE SHAFFERKOEETTER

Carol McKeever, a teacher at Trinity Learning Center, gave a lesson to Christopher Dillon.

# Storytellers carry on ancient tradition

By JENNIFER JUDGE  
Post Correspondent

KINGSTON TWP. - Mary Baker has been playing guitar and taking voice lessons since she was 12 years old, but it wasn't until 1989 that she discovered an art which best utilized her talents.

In 1989, Baker attended a Storytelling Festival at the University of Scranton, an event which would encourage her to form Voices of the Valley in 1990 along with fellow storytellers Leanne Grace and Gerry Hart. Baker says, "I went to that and fell in love with storytelling."

Voices of the Valley is a storytelling group that hosts events throughout the area. They meet the third Monday of every month at 7 p.m. at the Osterhout Library in Wilkes-Barre. During meetings, the group spends time practicing stories and giving each other storytelling tips. Baker says, "You need a support group. You don't meet a lot of storytellers."

Meetings and yearly workshops are open to the public. "We don't advertise and we don't have dues," Baker explains. "We are strictly an informal group."

Voices of the Valley currently has about a dozen strong members. Baker is the only member from the Back Mountain. Other members come from Springville, White Haven, Sugarloaf, Huntingdon Mills, and Falls. Their youngest member is 25 and their oldest 85. They come from diverse backgrounds and bring stories out of those backgrounds. Among their members is a Native American historian, a librarian, a writer, a retired nurse, and two preschool teachers.

"One of our main functions is to 'promote storytelling,'" Baker explains. "We need to let people know that storytelling isn't just for kids. The stories have a lot to give us, from teaching us lessons to 'entertaining us.'" Baker believes storytelling can be fun for everyone. "We all have our own little niche. Every storyteller is so different. There has to be one storyteller you can connect with," Baker says.

They promote storytelling in the area through group events and also by individual activity. Every October, Voices of the Valley holds Ghost Story Night at Frances Slocum State Park. This is their most successful event, usually drawing a crowd of about 250



Voices of the Valley members, from left, foreground; Valerie Johnson, Florence Howanitz, Mary Baker, Janet Dunn-Davenport, Leanne Grace, Dawn Beichler. Background; Kathy Sklaney, Trish Palmer, Betty Yedinak, Gerry Hart.

*"We need to let people know that storytelling isn't just for kids."*

Mary Baker  
Voices of the Valley

people on a good night and earning the group \$150 to \$200. Voices of the Valley uses the revenue to buy books and cassettes about storytelling which they donate to the Osterhout Library.

On the Saturday before Thanksgiving, the group also participates in TeLabration, an international event. At 8 p.m., in locations throughout the world storytellers began telling stories. This year's event, held at the Montessori School in Kingston, was one of five locations in Pennsylvania. Six local storytellers performed for about 30 people. The evening was billed as "A Night of Magic," and featured tricks by storyteller/magician Harry Sauers between stories.

In the summer months, Voices of the Valley runs a series called Stories in the Parks. This year, they told stories in Nesbitt Park on the river front in Wilkes-Barre. Once a year, the group brings in a well-known storyteller to host a storytelling workshop at the Rainbow School in Shickshinny. This event is open to the public.

The group members also work on their own. "We're all indepen-

dent," Baker says. "We're all in schools telling stories and at women's clubs and conferences. Independently, we are spreading the art." Baker often tells stories at Frances Slocum on Saturday nights.

Baker, who has played music at Open Mic Night at Chicory House and who is actively involved in her church's music, explains her connection to storytelling. "It was a way for me to do the entertaining that's in my blood and have the freedom to do it in my own time. I love being in front of people and sending messages. I definitely have some stage bug in me."

Baker, a mother of two, teaches physical education at the Montessori School and is also a seamstress. She says she doesn't have a lot of time to create her own stories and often tells traditional stories. She looks forward to the day when she will have more time to pursue the art. She says, "In five to 10 years, I hope the voice is still there to tell stories and sing songs every day."

Voices of the Valley wants to host more events in the future. They hope to perform at Tudor Bookstore and Cafe and at the Rainforest Cafe in Tunkhannock. "I think word is getting out," Baker says. "I see a lot of growth from when we first started meeting."

## Trinity

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But things soon started rolling. "I hired a director and some teachers and got a school board together. The tuition took care of pay for the teachers, supplies, and contributions to the church for allowing us the space," she said.

Although Pilleralla wasn't a teacher at Trinity, she was very active as chairperson of the board. She had great influence in choosing the direction the school would take.

"The purpose was to present a program of a balanced combination of creative experience and structured activity," explains Pilleralla. She believes children should be challenged to develop in their learning and that it is vital for each child to develop a positive self concept.

Since 1971, the school has grown in size and with the times. It now has 75 students and a larger staff, but the essential philosophy is the same. "Our school gets the children together to socialize. It's their first introduction to school. Here they learn to cooperate and share," said Carol McKeever, who teaches three year olds. "It gives the children something to bring home and share."

The school goes on many field trips during the year that allow the children to have a variety of experiences. "We have gone to the

## Nursery school to present 'Rudolph'

The parents of Trucksville Nursery School will present a one act play entitled "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" on Sat. Dec. 7, at 2 p.m. in the Education Building at Trucksville United Methodist Church. The 30 minute play, written by Susan Collini, is appropriate for preschool and early elementary school children and will include singing, dancing and a visit from Santa Claus. Admission is free.

*"It's a good start because they discover that learning is fun."*

Claire Parkhurst  
Mother of 3 Trinity students

Grassy Ridge Orchard and the Shavertown Fire Department where the kids learned fire safety," said McKeever. But, that's not all.

"We try to get them to the community, but the community comes to them also," said Sandy Davenport, Trinity's director. "We have a guitarist come in and play for the kids and we even had eight musicians from the Northeastern Philharmonic play," said Davenport. The children also play with blocks, art, and "anything that's messy," said Davenport laughing.

The parents are also invited to be involved. There is a picnic in the fall for both the parents and children and on Valentine's Day, there is a social for the parents to watch the children perform songs

and dance.

Parents appreciate the smaller pre-school where children can be attended to individually. "I like it because it's small and the fact that they're more interested in nurturing, rather than cramming skills into them," said Megan Painter, whose five-year-old daughter attends the school.

"Trinity has a creative and loving environment where my kids learned to be away from me in a school situation. It's a good start because they discover that learning is fun," said Claire Parkhurst, who is the mother of three Trinity students.

*"It's their first introduction to school. Here they learn to cooperate and share."*

Carol McKeever  
Trinity teacher

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