

## Women's health

(continued from page 1)

child care and a job, but they have no benefits. How are they going to stay healthy and provide for their families? If women and children are a priority, this should be a priority in the budget," she said.

Mary Lou Schaefer, executive director/CEO of Maternal and Family Health Services (MFHS) in Wilkes-Barre, could not agree more. For the past 25 years, she has worked as a nurse and administrator for MFHS. She has also had to watch the once abundant bank account dwindle in recent years.

### Getting some funding back

From the \$1 million Mundy fought for, MFHS of NEPA, a grantee, will divide \$133,000 between 15 counties. The rest of the money will go to MFHS regional grantees in the southeastern, central and western part of the state.

"We have been being cut since 1995. At least this will make up for some of the lost money," said Schaefer.

The MFHS's statewide budget is down \$718,000 from three years ago. In 1995 the federal government issued \$4.7 million to MFHS. By 1998 that figure had dropped to \$3.8 million.

The state has actually increased monies for women's health by \$122,000 in the last two years. MFHS will receive \$3.1 million from the state this year, bringing its grand total to \$6.9 million.

When asked why legislators would oppose money for health care for the poor, Schaefer said she believes many people have misconceptions about what family planning is.

"There is a misconception of the abortion issue. None of the funding we get is allowed for any type of abortion services in any way, shape or form. Unfortunately, there are people who cannot make that distinction. They lump family planning with abortion. Family planning is used to prevent the need for abortion, but that gets clouded in people's minds. They don't take the time to go and get the facts," said Schaefer.

Family planning services provided by MFHS include instruction in basic anatomy and physiology of reproduction; complete physical exam, including screening services for the detection of other medical problems; instructions for proper use of birth control; counseling for medical/social problems, referral to other services; follow-up and medical complication follow-up, and contraceptive services that include supplies. Services do not include abortion or abortion counseling or pregnancy testing.

MFHS also provides prenatal and delivery care, a Women, Infants and Children program and breast and cervical cancer detection programs for older women.

In 1997, MFHS served 2,888 women in Luzerne County, nearly half of whom received care under the block grant programs. Bob Cunningham, director of family planning, said that adds up to more than 10,000 visits, since

## Senior group to learn about volunteerism

Amy Gwiazdzki, a representative of the Volunteers of America organization will be the guest speaker at the monthly business meeting of the Back Mountain Senior Citizens, May 7.

Ms. Gwiazdzki's subject will concern the duties of "Care-Givers". There will be a question and answer period following the presentation.

The meeting will start at 1 p.m. at the Father Sammon's Hall, lower level of St. Therese's Church, Shavertown.

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each client makes an average of about 2.5 visits per year.

### A question of perception

Schaefer and Cunningham believe many legislators and the public have the wrong idea about who MFHS helps. They say many assume that only teenage, single mothers visit the clinic and that somehow the clinic encourages irresponsibility.

"We know the public perception to be wrong and we cannot correct that misconception," said Cunningham. "We don't like the fact that adolescents are having children. We counsel them on the importance of their decision and encourage them to speak with their parents. We are parents of teenagers, we are uncles and aunts ourselves."

Also, people think anyone who walks into an MFHS clinic can just ask for and receive contraceptives. Schaefer emphasizes that everyone seeking birth control must have an examination and be screened for Chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease that can cause sterilization in women.

Cunningham points out that MFHS services are a part of health care. "Cervical cancer is completely preventable, but the women who can't afford examinations will not get help. Then if a woman finally gets checked when she's older and she has cancer, then it will be more costly for her and taxpayers."

In the northeast region, 50 percent of MFHS's patients are between 20-29 years old. More than 50 percent either receive free health care or are under a medical assistance program because they are at or below the poverty line. Thirty-seven percent of the patients pay on a sliding scale.

State representative George Hasay voted against Mundy's \$6 million proposal because he did

not want to take money out of the tourism fund and does not want to support private agencies. When asked if tourism was more important than women's health care, he said it was a good question, but said Mundy should have sought the money from elsewhere.

"I'm a proponent of state health centers," he explained. "More legislators are aware of these centers than family planning. I'm experienced with the people the state centers serve, impact and the service they provide." Hasay said he would be willing to visit a family planning clinic to familiarize himself the services they provide and who they help.

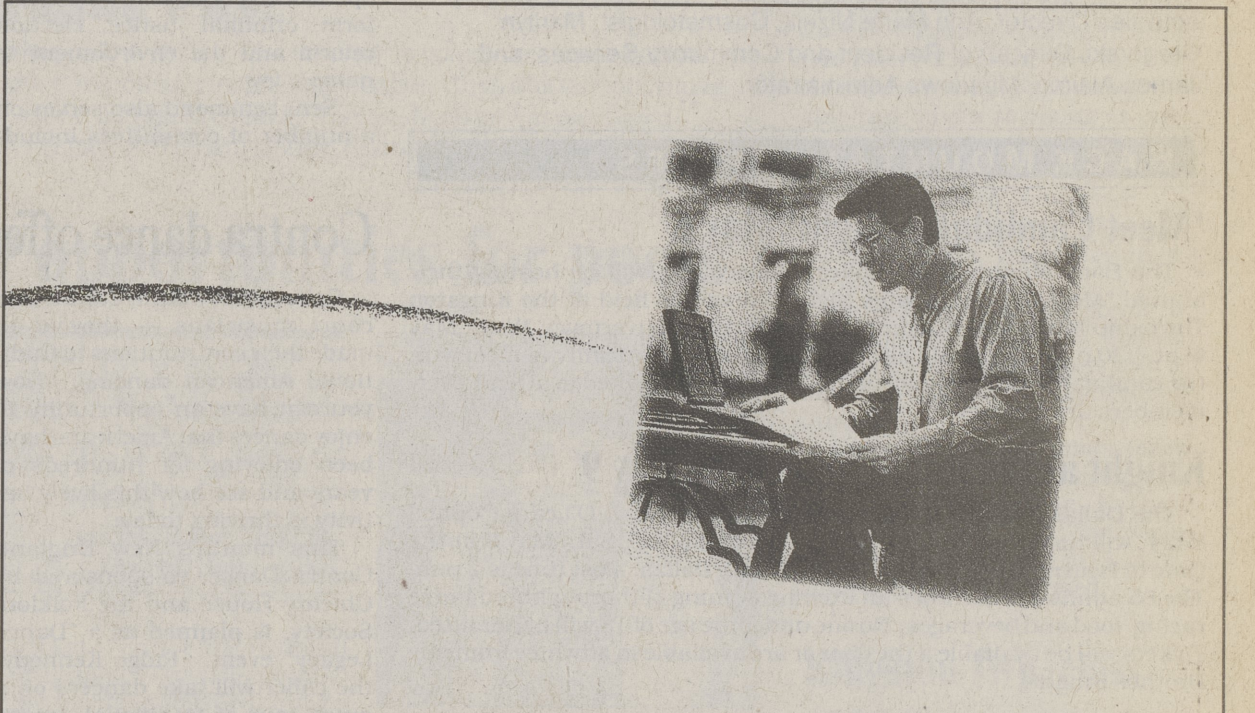
Hasay said it is not definite that he would never support family planning. "It depends on the details and issues," he said. He did say that the issue of abortion turned him and others off to family planning.

MFHS was established in 1971 to administer comprehensive family planning services to women in need in Luzerne, Lackawanna and Wyoming counties. It provides direct services through five of its own clinics in Wilkes-Barre, Milford, Pottsville, Honesdale and Tunkhannock and by contract through clinics of other health providers. In 1997, more than 36,000 women were treated by this clinic network. Schaefer said the number is growing every year.

MFHS was organized under the Family Planning Services and Population Research Act of 1970, which was enacted by Congress. The act authorized the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to make grants and to make contracts with public or non-profit private entities to assist in the establishment and operation of voluntary family planning projects.

## Scouts receive awards at Gate of Heaven

This is the list of Cub scouts receiving awards at Gate of Heaven on April 26. The teacher was Heide Cebrick. The coordinator was Rosemary Taylor. Light of Christ Awards: Pack 155: Matthew Alfano, Nicholas Frey, Paul Green, Cody McHutchison, Michael McHutchison, Joshua Pavlico, Kyle Piazza, Anthony Rubbico, Dominick Trombetta, and Eric Tucker. Pack 232: Joseph Balavage, Casey Baldwin, Julian Bartarillo, Carl Bartizek, Patrick Brady, John Frederick, Ben Gardner, Ryan Gregory, Thomas McGrath, Alex Puhalla, Ryan Regan, Kevin Rose, Michael Supczenski, Zackary Wallick, Zackary Ryan, Michael Tonart.



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