

EDITORIALS

Strong local businesses are good for Back Mountain

The signs are unmistakable — the Back Mountain is becoming a hotbed for business. More important, it is becoming a prime location for locally-owned and operated enterprises, the kind that not only provide products and services we want and need, but that support the local economy in many ways. Just look around and you'll see a brand-new grocery store (Thomas' Family Market), an expanding remodeler (Top Value Kitchens), a budding shopping center (Twin Stacks Center) and more, working with local capital and the owners' "sweat equity." And they all have this in common, too — they're trying to find their niche within the confines of a marketplace that is also attracting big players from around the nation.

Unlike the Wal-Marts and Home Depots of the world, these businesses aren't here because they've run out of bigger cities to invade as they try to prop up the stock price. No, most of the stock in these stores is on the shelves and in the back room, waiting for customers to show up and take it off their hands, so the payroll can be met and the mortgage paid. There's no home office with wads of cash at the ready in case things don't go as planned, no far-off place to send the receipts at the end of the day. These businesses are here because people hold dear the dream of running their own show, building a good life by serving their neighbors to the best of their ability.

There are other differences. Just ask anyone who raises funds for local organizations how it feels to visit a chain store when seeking donations. To their credit, some large companies try to be supportive, but in many cases the money flows only one way — out of here, perhaps to charities closer to headquarters.

Local businesses are working to earn your trade just like the big stores do, and you have a stake in their success, because they are a part of the Back Mountain community. Give them a chance to do their part this holiday season and all year long.

A good result from an imperfect system

The effort to stop illicit drug use struck home with one Back Mountain family recently, when random drug testing of student athletes at Dallas High School turned up the first positive result. A player was dismissed from a fall sports team, and was referred to counseling, along with family members. That is as good a turn of events as we could expect from what still seems like a flawed system.

The logic of testing athletes and exempting everyone else hinges on the idea that an athlete exposes him or herself and teammates to greater risk of injury if playing under the influence of a drug. That is undoubtedly true, but there is still reason to question a system that singles out one particular class of student, while exempting others, and teachers.

But the system is now in place, and everyone must adapt to it. One thing that shouldn't be in dispute is how the matter was handled. The student could not be expelled or suspended from classes, because possession was not an issue. But even if suspension was an option, it would have been the wrong choice. A young person who uses drugs, whether once at the wrong time or habitually, needs help, not punishment. That the family is included can only increase the odds that harmful behavior will be overcome.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



"The best laid plans of mice and men oft' go awry," wrote the poet Robert Burns in 1786. (Translated here from the original brogue.) If you've watched much television lately, you know not much has changed since then. I'm not talking about the programs, which oft', to paraphrase Ben Hogan's comment about a young Jack Nicklaus's golf game, portray "lives with which I am not acquainted." No, I'm talking about the ads, which have become as much a part of the viewing experience as the shows. But, for all their testing and consumer surveys, advertisers throw millions worth of message in our faces still to miss the mark. In some cases, the ads, and our interpretation of them, is more entertaining than the programs that fill airtime between them. (That's what the shows are, you know, time between the ads.)

A prime example is the current campaign in which the message seems to be that almost everything in life can be had by charging it to a MasterCard — except, of course, those things that are "priceless." After howling with laughter over the conceit of these ads, my family decided to go them one better by creating some copy of our own. Here are a few of them:

"100 lb. bag of fertilizer, \$45. Ten gallons heating oil, \$8.79. Seeing your mother-in-law's garage explode . . . priceless."

"Twelve speaker AM/FM car stereo with CD player, \$299. Five CD's, \$75. Switching radio station from Fred Williams to WVIA . . . priceless."

"Rossignol ski outfit, \$499. Two lift tickets at Vail, \$90. Excellent nursing care for broken leg . . . priceless."

Or, best of all, "Paying off MasterCard, \$2,123. Stamp, 32¢. Satisfaction in not playing the credit card game . . . priceless."

On the other hand, it must be a pretty effective ad campaign if we're spending this much time talking about it.

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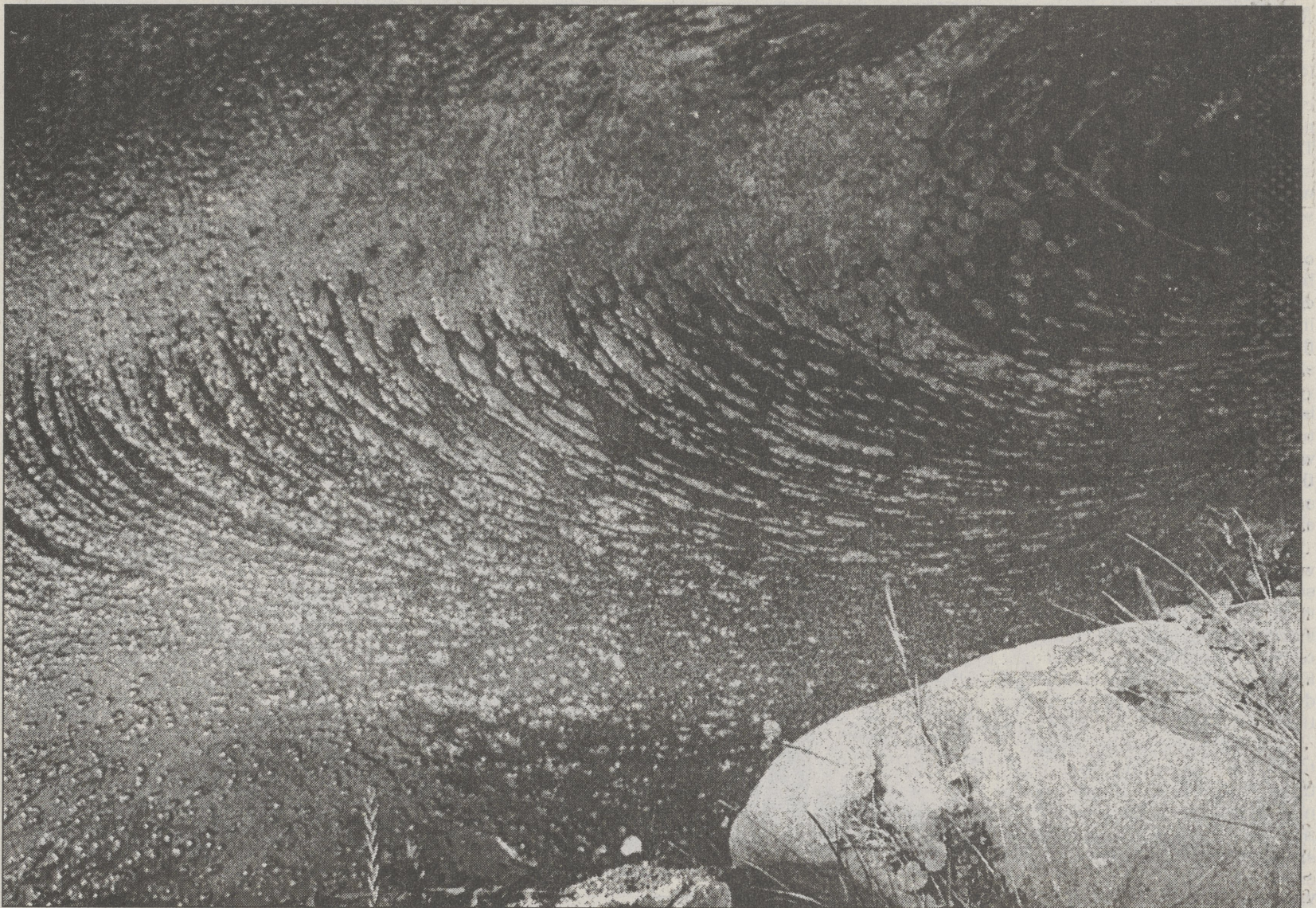
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Just another algae bloom, or a major tsunami? You decide. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

'Improvements' in technology taking district backwards

Editor:
As the managing editor of *KnightLife*, the student newspaper at Lake-Lehman High School, I try to find issues to report that are of concern to the students and faculty of the high school that everyone may know the facts behind the issues. Recently, I wrote an article in our publication concerning the regression of technology at Lake-Lehman that is masked by positive publicity that is disseminated throughout the community. Unfortunately, your newspaper was fooled by the facade of the technological status at our institution of learning as other publications and members of our community have been.

The major problem which the

students and faculty of the Lake-Lehman High School face is poor management of the technology which the school presently has in its possession. Currently, students only have limited access to the Internet on several temperamental computers in the school library. If these computers are not working or the library is closed, then a student who needs to research a topic on the Internet is incapable of accomplishing this task. This is a severe problem considering that some teachers require Internet research for some projects and not all students are fortunate enough to have Internet access at home.

This situation did not always exist at the high school. During

the last school year, students had access to the Internet in a computer lab full of computers that was open throughout much of the day, as well as access in several other rooms of the high school. This system was undermined by the addition of the Distance Learning Lab and new computer lab; an improvement which brought about a technological regression.

One may think that an "improvement" can bring only advancement, but instead, at Lake-Lehman High School, an inefficient and poorly designed computer system has reduced the availability of certain privileges to the vast majority of students. While there is a new computer lab at the high school with Internet brows-

ing software, this lab is occupied by classes for all but two periods a day.

While the school district begins work on the new systems that were discussed in your article, the poorly organized computer system that currently exists will not be improved and will have the same reoccurring problems. The district will once again try to take on too many technology projects at once. Instead of moving forward as other school districts have, our school will get caught in the "Web" and fall behind.

Ben Wolfe
Senior, Lake-Lehman
High School
KnightLife Managing Editor

A Case for conservation



People used to call me to find out where certain items could be recycled. Those calls are much less frequent now that many of our communities and institutions have good programs for handling recyclables and reducing our need for landfill space. Now, I get calls asking where someone can buy recycled products, such as paper for printers or copiers. Until recently, I was almost as much in the dark as the folks who came to me asking advice. Then, a friend loaned me her copy of the 1998 "Buyers Guide to Recycled Products."

Any inspection of that publication would leave two immediate impressions: (1) there are a lot of recycled products out there, and (2) many of them are produced and/or distributed in Pennsylvania. The "Buyers Guide to Recycled Products" is published by the Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) and the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). Their purpose is to increase the demand for products made

The practicalities of buying recycled

from discarded materials within the Commonwealth. As stated in the introduction, "The size and strength of the market is determined by you, the consumer." In other words, if we want to be able to buy a variety of recycled products at the supermarket or department store, we need to demand such products.

We could begin by simply purchasing the products that we see that are recycled. Be aware, however, that often recycled products are made from materials that are left over in the manufacturing process (from the "cutting room floor," as they say) and contain little, if any, material which was put out at the curbside to be recycled. If you want to increase the market for those materials, you must look for a high percentage of "Post-consumer" waste included in the product.

My husband and I recently found a birthday card for his father that showed some smiling trees on the front. The message underneath was "No trees were harmed to bring you this birthday card." And inside it read, "However, a bunch of old newspapers were beaten to a pulp." (This particular card was a "Tomato Card" made by Recycled Paper Greetings.)

It seems a bit ironic to me that those industries that relied on hard ores (steel, aluminum, glass)

in the past are the ones that use the most recycled materials. In fact, structural beams and reinforcement bars are made with virtually 100% recycled steel. Car frames and appliances now contain about 25% post-consumer waste. They are not marked as such because all steel now produced in the United States uses recycled iron. Aluminum soda cans now contain at least half post-consumer material, and the new cans are on store shelves within two months of the collection of used aluminum cans.

Paper and plastic items continue to be problematic. For those, I recommend that you (or a group of you) order the 1998 "Buyers Guide to Recycled Products." Send a \$4.00 check (people outside of PA send \$6) made out to "PRC" to their address 3606 Providence RD, Newtown Square PA 19073. Include your name and address, of course. I also recommend that those of you who own businesses or are otherwise involved in high volume buying get a copy of this document. You can also log on to the PRC website at <http://www.prc.org/> or call them at (800) GO TO PRC. (Remember that the products and companies listed in this book - or in this column, for that matter - are not being recommended but are there for your information.)

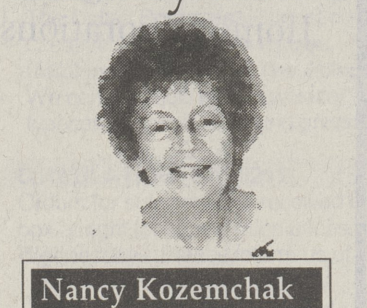
Many of the recycled products

available are used in the construction industry. Plastic lumber is now used for everything from playground equipment and decks to fences and docks. Such brands as U.S. Plastic Lumber, Renew, Aloha Plastic Recycling, Everlast, and Amazing Recycled Products are almost entirely (96-100%) made from recycled #2 plastic. Other construction materials like insulation, ceiling tiles, rolled rubber flooring and carpets can be made from newspapers, old tires, or soda bottles. There is even a company in Allentown that uses discarded paint to make "Angel Touch" latex paints!

Catalogs such as "Real Goods" or "Seventh Generation" continue to offer a variety of recycled products for use in the home. These tend to be rather expensive, but, if we wish to live more lightly on the planet, we may have to pay more for these things until they are available in our local stores.

Let us, as buyers, continue to educate ourselves. As we purchase more and more recycled products, we will improve the demand for the recyclables we discard. The prices for those materials will go up, and the prices for items made from them will go down. Eventually, all sections of the economy will find that "it pays to recycle." And, our earth will be a better place to live. This is the ultimate in "Win-Win" situations.

Library news



The children's room of the Back Mountain Memorial Library announces the next sessions of story hour scheduled to begin in February. The toddler story hour begins Tuesday, Feb. 2 for children 2 years and early 3 years old. Program will be held Tuesday mornings from 10 to 10:30 a.m. Registration will be from January

Next round of story hours registers Jan. 4-9

4 - 9 at the library. The story hours for 3 to 5 years old will be held on Wednesdays, three sessions: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.; 10:45 to 11:45 a.m. and 1 to 2 p.m. Registration is January 4 - 9.

New books at the library: "The Civil Rights Movement" by John M. Dunn is a book from the world history series; quality nonfiction for libraries and classrooms. Many children ask why they should study history. One logical answer to the question is that exploring what happened in our past explains how the thing we often take for granted came to be. Civil rights are entitlements guaranteed by the U.S. government. The modern civil right movement lasted for two decades. Another

world history book is "America in the 1960's" by Michael Kronenwetter. The decade of the sixties was a national roller coaster ride of great hope and terrible despair. It was a time of idealism and enormous promise but also violent conflict and bitter disillusionment, both at home and abroad. It was a time when the largest generation in American history grew to adulthood.

"Sewing packs, pouches, seats & sacks" by Betty Oppenheimer included 30 practical projects with step-by-step illustrations by the author. All you need is a basic sewing machine to create fabulous, functional items that will

make your hobbies and household chores easier and more enjoyable. These include items for the home, the workshop, the garden and camp. There are also ideas for finishing and embellishing the projects with a variety of decorative techniques.

"We Wish You A Merry Christmas"; favorite stories and carols with illustrations by Donna Green includes 23 Christmas carols with piano music and words for the verses and colorful illustrations corresponding to the carol. The stories include authors, Hans Christian Andersen, Edith Nesbitt, Clement C. Moore, Charles Dickens, Kenneth Grahame, Laurie Lee, (Luke 2:1, 3-20), Lucretia Hale and O. Henry.