

EDITORIALS

Spread the word... the future looks bright

Message to anyone who is worried about the future: Relax, we're in good hands. Thankfully, we hear and see fewer stories about Generation X slackers and teenage criminals these days than in recent years. It's uncertain why this is so, but perhaps it's because the good news about young people is finally overwhelming the bad. But just in case you needed reinforcement, there is plenty of it to go around.

Several examples of the quality of today's youth were on display Saturday evening during the Killer Bees Athletic Club's annual awards banquet. The room was filled with talented, hardworking young people and beaming adults, some of them parents, others coaches and still others people who simply feel it's important to recognize excellence in the classroom and on the playing field. While the club focuses on athletics, some of its most prestigious awards are given to "student-athletes," with the emphasis in the same order as the words. The Back Mountain was well-represented, as Stephanie Potisek, an outstanding Dallas High senior, walked away with top female honors, and Kyle Droppers, a senior at Wyoming Seminary, was among three finalists on the male side. Matt Gingo, another Dallas senior, won the "Unsung Hero" award for his tireless dedication on the football field. By the way, he's also a top student.

This Thursday night will offer another demonstration that today's young people are by and large more capable, focused and responsible than we may have been led to believe. About 400 Boy Scouts will jam the Shavertown United Methodist Church for an annual ecumenical service. The event is moved to a different area of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Council each year, and local organizers are delighted to have the chance to be hosts this year.

Brian Miller, 17, of Dallas, has selected four hymns to play on organ during the service. Brian, who has completed the requirements for Eagle Scout, is no stranger to performing, since he plays regularly at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Wilkes-Barre and the United Church of Christ, Pittston. He is eager to play, he says, because it is an honor to perform for the gathering, and presents a chance for him to give back to the Boy Scouts part of what the organization has given him.

So, take heart all you senior citizens and soon-to-retire baby boomers. The next generation may turn out to be even better than we think we are. Isn't that the way it's supposed to be?

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Many people in the "news business" (which ought to be an oxymoron, but isn't) consider local television news the dregs of the profession, at least from the standpoint of content. Generally, the criticism is directed at the unending stream of crime and violence many stations present. Not in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton market. Here, as often as not, we have to sit through several boring minutes of ordinary events dressed up with breathless commentary, provided by reporters who seem to have a form of palsy that forces them to move about and wave their arms while staring at the camera as though it was a rifle trained between their eyes.

Take the 10 o'clock newscast one day last week, please. (I watch that one so I can go to bed by 10:15. It's tough to get old.) The lead story described how the wall of a building that was being torn down had rested gently on a house next door. No one was injured, nothing was damaged much and the work went on after the tumbledown wall was moved. Next up was the earthshaking news that a short section of Interstate 81 would be closed the next day... for a whole five minutes! I didn't stay up long enough to find out if there was a story about a filthy house overcrowded with pets, a staple of local newscasts; or a pothole, which often becomes the subject of daily followups all week long; or snow flurries, accompanied by the standard pictures of cars moving easily along the highway.

If I was a television news director, I'd propose a radical idea: Make the newscast only as long as the real news of the day. (And a fire at someone's garage in Lycoming County wouldn't make the cut.) That would free up at least half the broadcast. Limiting the weather to 30 seconds, all that's needed to give us their best guess for the next day, would help, too.

For that matter, we could do the same thing with lots of newspapers, which fill the space around the ads with stories hardly anyone cares about or understands. Then, along with our time, we'd save a few trees.

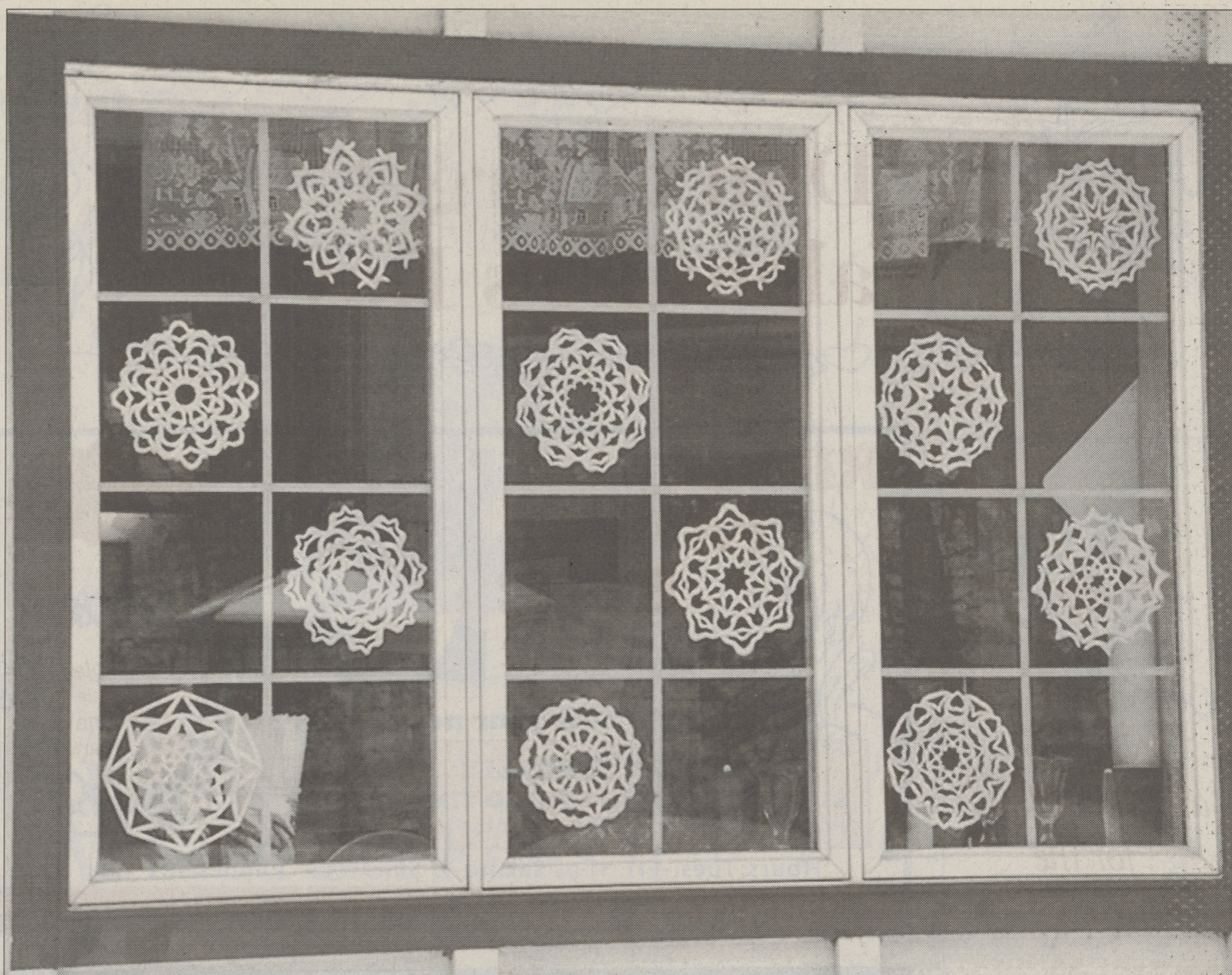
Of course, the preceding comments don't apply to my favorite newspaper, which fills each column with articles and photos of supreme interest to our readers. Or at least I hope we do.

Do you agree? Disagree?

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Ronald A. Bartizek
PUBLISHERCharlotte E. Bartizek
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
OFFICE MANAGERJessica Appolo
ADVERTISING ACCT. EXECKylie Shafferkoetter
REPORTERRuth Proietto
PRODUCTION MANAGEROlga Kostrobala
CLASSIFIED/TYPESSETTING

Pretty windows, dressed up for the season. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

Let's use more positive means to teach children well

Editor:

The headline "Library volunteer asks that stolen sign be returned" (The Dallas Post, Feb. 3, 1999) is misleading, at best. The author does not "ask" that the "TO BOOKSHOP" sign be returned to the Library. He attacks the parents of the alleged library sign perpetrator, and it seems parents everywhere.

Did this person ever raise a child? Did the child pass successfully through his/her teens? And to his knowledge did he/she ever find themselves in a little trouble?

Secondly, why does the author automatically assume that the parents are protecting and harboring a known felon? I'm sure if asked, parents would be glad to aid in the recovery of the Bookshop

sign.

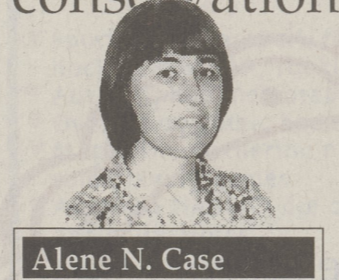
I believe more positive results to the community and the people directly involved in this matter would be gained by civility and common decency. Decency is often tested, as kids pass through their teen years. Yet, with positive experiences through these troubling times, children mature and gain respect for people and prop-

erty.

Hopefully the sign will be returned; the parents will handle the situation so that it is a positive learning experience; and the author will consider alternative means of "asking" for parents' cooperation in the future.

Patrice R. Persico
Shavertown

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

North Americans often feel separated from social problems and their solutions. We depend on government or large non-profit organizations to deal with problems of illegal drugs, poor housing, law enforcement, education, and environmental regulations. However, as I pointed out in my column two weeks ago, that approach will not work with nonpoint source pollution. Each person in each household must take the responsibility of keeping unwanted substances out of our waterways.

One day I was walking along a street near our home. It had recently rained and I began to notice that about every twenty feet there was an iridescent splotch on the wet pavement. As I approached a stop sign, the splotches came about every yard or so. Obviously, there is a driver in our community who must fill the oil pan almost as frequently as the fuel tank. Now, you might think that this is only a minor annoyance to that particular driver. But, that oil, added to all the other oil that washes off parking lots, streets, storm drains (illegal motor

We can all do something about pollution

oil), roofs, and other surfaces, contributes about half of the oil that reaches our waterways each year. Shipping accidents and offshore oil production contribute only about one quarter of the total. If little drops of oil add up to large amounts of oil pollution, we can obviously help tremendously by keeping our automobiles repaired and by taking our waste oil to a recycling center or garage.

Winter is a good time to think about nonpoint sources of pollution. The very salt we often use to melt snow and ice can cause problems for streams and for plants such as pine trees or laurel bushes. Salt tends to dissolve in water and therefore often does not stay where it is spread and more must be applied. Sand is cheaper, does not dissolve, and often provides more traction than salt. It does not ruin your boots and it can be vacuumed up from indoor surfaces. In short, why are we using salts of various kinds?

Winter is also a good time to think about spring. In the area where we live, that often means dreaming about the lawns and flower or vegetable gardens that will be tended when the weather is warmer. This year, I challenge you to do these things in an ecological manner as possible. Plant native shrubs and wildflowers that will not require the high doses of fertilizers and pesticides that other flowers often need. Cultivate small areas at a time so that runoff is limited. Cover exposed lawn areas with straw while grass seed sprouts. Mulch and use compost

as fertilizer so that water remains on your garden long enough to soak in. For additional information on all of these strategies, order a copy of the Bayscapes Information Packet by calling 1-800-662-CRIS.

One of the largest contributors to nonpoint source pollution is the agricultural sector of the economy. Large feedlots are only now beginning to be regulated in any meaningful way. It will be many years before the voluntary programs and incentives put out by state and federal agencies will really clean up the effluents going into waterways from farms. Some farmers are very conscientious and should be rewarded with our patronage. When you see contour plowing or strip cropping, fencing off of green belts along streams, settling lagoons, and other strategies in use, please note the name of the farm and purchase its products. You can also avoid the use of unnecessary pesticides and herbicides by buying "organic" produce. If farmers realize we care about their runoff into our waterways, they will very likely change the way they treat the land.

Since energy production contributes large amounts of nitrogen (and sometimes sulfur) to the air and, thence, into our waterways, we can be good to our environment by using less electricity. This does not mean sitting in the dark or being otherwise inconvenienced. It does mean trying the new compact fluorescent light bulbs and taking every chance to hang your clothes on the line to

dry. (Who knows? You may see the first flock of geese coming back north.) It also may mean switching to a company like Green Mountain Energy Resources that does not use coal or oil to produce its electricity.

Finally, I would like to ask all of us to pay more attention to the way we treat the sides of streams and lakes. Forested buffers are absolutely essential to the health of these banks. Grass that is cut regularly does not have the same effect. In fact, simply refraining from cutting the grass along a ditch or stream often leads to a more natural bank that is not slumping into the waterway. Since erosion was one of the worst sources of nonpoint pollution that I mentioned in my last article, it seems only rational to prevent erosion along the stream or lake itself. Trees can be planted, willow bundles can be driven into the bank to take root, fences can be built, and buildings can be set back.

All of these things (and, I haven't even mentioned construction practices or mining effluent controls) will help make our waterways clean for ourselves, for our children, and for the animals and plants that live in them. Nonpoint source pollution is one of those rare problems that we as North Americans cannot point the finger at a certain industry nor can we expect a government agency to "fix" it for us. No, we are all responsible. Each of us must begin now to solve some part of the problem.

Library news



Nancy Kozemchak

The Back Mountain Memorial Library circulated 3,587 books during the month of January: adult fiction, 2,087; juvenile fiction, 1,471; young adult fiction 28; adult non fiction 1,738; juvenile non fiction 893. Reference questions answered 45; Book Club books circulated 212; Interlibrary loan transactions 72; CDs 68;

Children's room assistant added

audio tapes 414; and videos 275. New books added to the collection: adult 135; juvenile 13; books withdrawn, adult 26; juvenile 24. New borrowers adult 56; juvenile 48; re-registrations adult 15; juvenile 28. Total active borrowers as of January 31, 1999 = 11,729.

The library is in the process of having the cable and electrical work done for the automation system. The library members will begin the barcoding for the books in the near future.

The special past library auction pictures hanging in the community room have recently had a gold plate attached with the month and year of the auction.

A new assistant for the

children's room, Mary Daly, has been hired to help with the extra activity in the new room. She began her duties on Wednesday, Feb. 3. She will be working with Mrs. Rudolph in the children's section. The toddler story hour program filled quickly with a waiting list. A decision was made to divide the group in half to include the waiting list. Ann Crompton and Karen Attansio will each lead one section of the group.

The three to five year old sessions are filled as well with Frances McOwen, Susan Kocher and Lisie Gottdenker as story ladies.

Den 3, Pack 155, consisting of 10 cub scouts and parents, toured the library, acquired library cards

and enjoyed investigating the children's room with the computers and new books. They each learned how to put a new jacket cover on a book.

A tour of the library by 14 home schooled children and their parents was held on Jan. 26. The children, ranging in age from 5 to 14, were from the Shickshinny area and were under the direction of Karen Nast. The group registered for library cards, learned about the card catalogue and browsed.

Mrs. Rudolph attended a planning meeting for the summer reading game 1999 on January 25. The game is called "Route for Reading".