



The Dallas Post

50 Cents

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF THE DALLAS & LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Vol. 110 No. 24

Dallas, Pennsylvania

June 16 thru June 22, 1999

Lack of rain beginning to take toll on home owners, farmers

By KASIA McDONOUGH
Post Staff

BACK MOUNTAIN - The pitter-patter sounds and lighthearted sights of a spring shower are sadly absent from the landscape of late, requiring Governor Ridge to declare a drought warning for the 47 counties in Pennsylvania.

The unusually dry weather is beginning to take a toll, not just on happy youngsters hoping to soak unsuspecting parents, but on area farmers, landscapers and consumers who are facing impending water shortages. "Over the last 120 days, Luzerne County has received 9.7 inches of rain, which is 3.4 inches below the norm for this time of year," said John Chiaramonti, of the National Weather Service.

Consumers throughout the state are encouraged to reduce water usage by 10 to 15 percent and United Water, a local provider serving many Back Mountain communities, has issued a series of tips to assist with the cutback. The company warns that mandatory restrictions, limiting household water consumption to 40 gallons per day, may be implemented if voluntary measures do not reduce demands and the rainfall shortages continue.

The U.S. Geological Service reports that the prolonged period of dry weather has started to affect ground water levels which may lead to trouble for those who depend upon wells. "We have a network of wells throughout the state which we monitor regularly," said Dennis Risser. "Things are getting very dry to the point that people with shallow wells may start to experience low water pressure."

Bob Sorber, of Sorber Well Drilling in Sweet Valley, has observed changes which can be attributed to the lack of rain. "So far, we haven't had problems with drilling new wells, but I have noticed that when pulling old pumps out of the ground the

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Having a ball at graduation



POST PHOTO/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Graduation ceremonies at Dallas High School were interrupted by bouncing balls and silly string, in what has become an

annual exercise. Dallas graduated 77 girls and 82 boys June 11. More photos, including the whole class, on page 6.

For Lake-Lehman grads, an end, and a beginning

By DAVID FINE
Lake-Lehman High School junior

LEHMAN - Nine years ago was the beginning of a generation that gave us Ronald Reagan, legwarmers, and acid-washed jeans, but left something behind.

On June 6, 1999, Lake-Lehman High School held its 41st annual commencement ceremony. The sun and the parents alike shone on the stadium field where those in black and gold robes marched to mark an end of their experiences at the school. Graduation, however, had another context besides "end" that day; graduation also meant "beginning," a beginning that would require change. The same type of

change scared these graduates once as kindergartners when they first entered Lake-Lehman. The same, scared feeling that marks every rung on the ladder each of us climb.

Graduation can never be written as one type of experience. To many of the students it is a release from having to wake up at 7 a.m. To others it is the end of "one chapter in their book" as class president Trisha Pilosi explained, and to some it is just a layover, the final flight is about to take off momentarily. Intense emotions radiated from the seniors — joy, anticipation, sadness, confusion.

During the ceremony, the world

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POST PHOTO/JIM PHILLIPS

Tommie and Lottie Chipego, niece and nephew of Lake-Lehman graduation senior Lenette Zipay, waited anxiously to present her with a bouquet of flowers.

Final Dallas School District '99-00 budget has no tax increase

By KASIA McDONOUGH
Post Staff

DALLAS - The final version of the Dallas School District budget for the 1999-2000 academic year does not contain a millage increase.

The approved budget includes total expenses of \$19,614,081 and revenues totaling \$18,841,937,

which creates an unfavorable variance of \$772,144. This shortfall includes a \$500,000 reserve which has been established to cover unforeseen expenses that may occur in the next fiscal period.

A projected tax increase of 7 mills was included in the tentative budget which was presented to the school board May 10. The increase was avoided due to a

windfall of approximately \$600,000.

Elimination of the proposed tax hike came as a relief to at least one member of the audience at the June 14 school board meeting, who had cautioned the board against spending frivolously. "You can't buy the whole store at once," said Tom Dombroski, of Kingston Township. "I know we needed to

do some work on the elementary schools but we have to spread it out so it is less of a burden on the taxpayers. I think the board has been up front about how much it is spending, which is good."

The \$600,000 windfall, which is not recurring revenue, includes an adjustment made by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Northeastern Pennsylvania to extend the

period of time in which the school district must repay an outstanding balance as a condition of joining the proposed health care consortium. Dallas owes the insurer \$300,000 which will be repaid over a period of five years instead of the three-year period originally anticipated. The change reduces

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Martha Stewart is hot topic at business meeting

By RONALD BARTIZEK
Post Staff

LEHMAN - **Q:** What happens when a roomful of business and professional people are asked their observations of Martha Stewart, the "Diva of Domesticity," as she has been called?

A: A lively discussion that more closely resembles a political talk show than the placid atmosphere of "Martha Stewart Living."

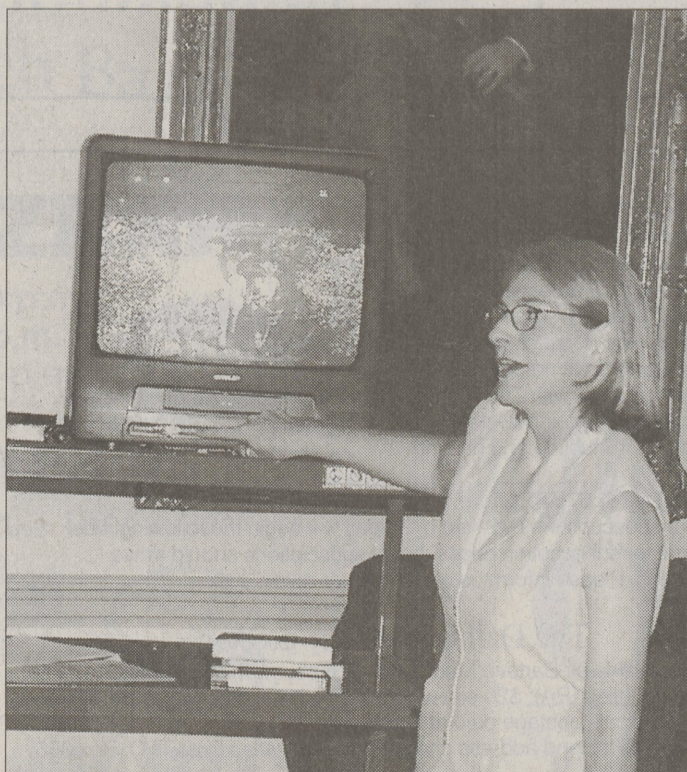
Linda Goldstein, Ph.D., who is co-writing a book about the Martha Stewart empire and its effect on American culture, spoke about the wildly successful entrepreneur to members of the Back Mountain Business and Professional Association last week. After outlining the vast reach of Stewart's various en-

deavors, which produce a combined \$250 million in annual sales, Goldstein opened the floor for discussion. And did she get it, as audience members expressed admiration, resentment and a range of other opinions.

Goldstein described Stewart as a "home keeper," who personifies the American dream of a self-made success. But Stewart's ability to appear successful with little stress or effort drew a rebuke from Elva Valentine, who acknowledged liking some of what Stewart does. "She's perpetuating a myth that you can have it all and do it all," Valentine said. "But you can't. I think it's destructive in the long run."

That's one sentiment she

See MARTHA, pg 7



POST PHOTO/IRON BARTIZEK

Linda Goldstein, an associate professor at Penn State Wilkes-Barre, played a video clip from a Martha Stewart television show during a presentation last week.

Churches plan to improve their communities

By KASIA McDONOUGH
Post Staff

NOXEN - The economy of rural communities in northern Luzerne and southern Wyoming County has suffered one devastating blow after another forcing often distraught residents to search for new opportunities in the wake of financial uncertainty.

These small towns were once bustling centers of community life and important contributors to the economic prosperity of Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Armour Leather Company provided steady employment for the men in Noxen, and surrounding towns, while area women worked at the local dress factories.

Earlier in this century, an array of small businesses also thrived in these communities. "There were three grocery

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