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Shortage of workers adds to farmers' concerns

By KASIA McDONOUGH
Post Staff

BACK MOUNTAIN - A shortage of field workers to the obstacles standing in the way of local farmers' success. That's in addition to the hurdles Mother Nature has placed in their path.

An extended period of below average rainfall and a week of scorching temperatures have meant more work and more worry for area farmers. "It's definitely been a problem," said Paul Brace, of Brace's Orchard. "We're lucky everything got a good start. It wasn't too dry early on, but now it's getting to the point where we're hoping for some rain."

Finding workers is difficult even when the weather is pleasant. "It's getting harder and harder to get help," said Brace, who is a seventh generation farmer. "I would plant a lot more if I had more hands to help with picking. That is my biggest problem. I just can't find people who want to do this kind of work."

The shrinking pool of workers means a growing number of family farms are going the way of the dinosaur. A generation ago, there were 88 fruit farms in Luzerne County and now only a handful remain. "Just in my lifetime, I have seen so many farms shut down. If the sons weren't interested in farming the property was sold, and once that happens it's divided and developed," said Brace. "I have three kids of my own, and I would never pressure them into keeping our place, but hopefully we'll be around for another generation."

The cost of maintaining a family farm sometimes makes it impractical to pass it on to children. "I wish we were getting better prices for our produce," said Darling. "It seems the price of everything goes up but we can't seem to get a fair value for fruits and vegetables in this market."

Many farmers have diversified in an effort to combat the problem of low prices. Growing house plants and fresh flowers is one popular variation. Some farmers have decided to allow customers to pick their own fruit as a way of saving labor costs and still others peddle more profit-

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POST PHOTO/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Baby's first auction

Talia Kosierowski, 2 weeks old, paid her first visit to the Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction last weekend, with her mother, Rebecca, right and Shirley Gingo, her grandmother. Talia was one of thousands of people who filled the auction grounds Thursday through Sunday for the 53rd annual auction, which provides about one-fourth of the library's operating budget. This year's event saw a record take for the antiques barn, over \$53,000. Results for other categories weren't available, but it is expected this year's total will set a new record.

More photos on page 5.

Wycallis school not fully on time

Material shortage will delay final completion, but shouldn't affect opening

By KASIA McDONOUGH
Post Staff

DALLAS - Much to the dismay of Dallas School Board members, the July construction update indicates the Wycallis Elementary School will not be finished on time.

Representatives from Quandt, the construction managers overseeing the project, reported problems with cedar siding and locker room tiles will delay completion. "The key words here are substantial completion," said John Koury, Project Manager. "The date for substantial completion is August 1, and the bulk of the work will be done at that time."

"Let's meet Sunday after church. We all have to pray to get this done."

Maureen Banks
Dallas school director

While the six to eight week delay should not interfere with school activities, the district is clearly not happy about this turn of events. "I don't like walking through the building and having people tell me things I don't know," said Dr. Gilbert Griffiths, Superintendent.

The school board briefly discussed withholding a payment of more than \$400,000 to the general contractor as a method of insuring speedy progress. "It's nice to keep this (payment) - it would be a good hammer to have," said Ben Jones, District Solicitor. "Unfortunately, withholding payment would only result in the subs (subcontractors) going unpaid and we don't want them walking off the job, delaying this thing even further."

Quandt officials informed the school board they had met with representatives of the general contractor several weeks ago to discuss their concerns about the

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2 towns' rec programs have answer for kids' summer blues

By KASIA McDONOUGH
Post Staff

BACK MOUNTAIN - The dog days of summer are upon us - the time of year when parents hear that dreaded phrase, "I'm bored. There's nothing to do around here."

Two Back Mountain communities offer children and their parents relief from vacation doldrums. Kingston Township and Dallas Borough run organized recreational programs designed to bring these suburban youngsters together. "There is no fee for our program which is a great feature," said Jack Wolensky, Dallas Recreation



POST PHOTO/KASIA McDONOUGH

Mike Dougherty rode his bike to the Dallas Rec Center, where he could play basketball or tennis, or challenge his friends at board games.

Coordinator. "But I think parents are really happy to know their kids have a nice safe place to spend a summer day and that they will be having a good time while they're here."

Both programs include park days during which children have an opportunity to enjoy time at their respective playgrounds. "I like playing on the rides and stuff," said Jamie Bartoo, a 6-year-old who attends the Kingston Township program. Her friend, Sara Kneal, thinks the swings and slides are cool, but field trips to Frances Slocum are her favorite activity. "I like going to the pool because I think swimming is fun," she said.

Children at the Dallas Rec Center were equally eager to rattle off a list of their top choices for summer fun. "I like everything," said Kyle Arnaud who is 8 years old. "But I guess wiffle ball is my favorite."

The Dallas program is open to youngsters from five years old to 16, while Kingston Township accepts five to 12 year olds. Both programs offer ample opportunities for each child to participate in an activity which is age appropriate.

Older children spend a good portion of their time playing basketball, soccer, and tennis. Board games such as chess and checkers are also popular among teens and pre-teens.

The programs' younger children enjoy many of the same activities. "Sometimes, I play basketball with Brenden and my



POST PHOTO/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Enjoying a dip in the pool at Frances Slocum State Park, Kingston Twp. summer rec campers and counselors, from left; Katie Gallagher, Frank Greenhalgh, Tim Allen, Chris Tucker, Ann Marie Greenhalgh, Dan Natituus, Eric Tucker.

new friends," said Austin Carr, who along with Brenden, his older brother, is a regular at the center.

In addition, both programs

offer optional field trips for a small fee. Some of the outings include visits to area attractions like Steamtown, the Crayola crayon factory and Hershey

Park. Other popular group activities are movie days and trips to the bowling alley.

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