

**EDITORIALS**

## Is a revolution needed to fix uneven taxation?

The Dallas School District has discovered what many property owners already knew — Luzerne County's long outdated tax assessments can be hazardous to your financial health.

Tired of paying more than their fair share of property taxes, individuals and businesses are challenging their assessments more often, and, with the help of lawyers specializing in the challenges, are usually winning.

The crux of the problem is the county's abject failure to update assessments since the early 1960's. Combined with state court rulings that prohibit revaluing properties at current prices when they are sold, the lack of reassessment has shifted the tax burden significantly onto anyone who builds a new home or office, and on commercial enterprises that expand. Aside from the obvious question of fairness, the county's irresponsibility is now compromising school and town budgets as challengers easily win their claims, reducing tax revenues. The result is likely to be millage increases, which will again strike harder at those who now pay higher taxes.

What's the problem, you may ask, in having prosperous families and businesses pay more tax than those who are less fortunate. Nothing, really, and that is how the property tax system is meant to work. But it becomes unfair, and ultimately counterproductive, when owners of more valuable property not only pay more based on the higher value, but many others pay less than they should simply because their homes or businesses are older. Thus, a home worth \$150,000 and built in 1999 may be taxed at several times that of a comparably valued home built in 1960, making the property tax progressive, rather than flat, as it was intended.

So here we are. Property owners who are savvy and wealthy enough to challenge assessments in court are reducing their tax bite, putting more pressure on those who are either too busy or too timid to take on the tax man. Meanwhile, most people living in pre-1963 homes are paying a fraction of what they should.

What is to be done? Cockeyed optimists will say that sooner or later, the county will be forced to reassess, while more cynical types point out that since there are far more older homes than newer ones (and they're more likely to be occupied by older people who vote), the commissioners won't commit political suicide anytime soon.

Maybe they could use a little help. Maybe if every property owner who is being asked to shoulder more than their share of taxes were to challenge their assessment the county would have no choice but to set things straight. It's a shame that might be the only way to return fairness to property taxes in the county.



Welcome to spring. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

**LETTERS**

### Thanks to Boy and Girl Scouts for successful food drive

Dear Editor:

Many Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts throughout the area recently collected hundreds of pounds of nonperishable food for our region's hungry families and individuals. The Weinberg Northeast Regional Food Bank commends the efforts of these young people, whose well-organized, mid-winter food drive came at a time of year when supplies are low at local soup kitchens and food pantries.

The "Scouting for Food" project teamed Girl Scouts from Penn's

Woods and Scranton-Pocono Councils with Boy Scouts from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Council. The Scouts encouraged residents throughout the region to place bags of food on their doorsteps or in collection boxes at their work places and sporting events on a well-organized pick up day in early March.

The Weinberg Northeast Regional Food Bank is a program of the Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO). The Food Bank has 81 member agencies

and 134 program sites throughout Luzerne, Lackawanna, Susquehanna, and Wyoming Counties. As an affiliate of America's Second Harvest, a national network of donated food, the Weinberg Food Bank distributes more than two million pounds of food annually to local food pantries, shelters and kitchens.

More than 30 million Americans do not have enough food to meet their basic needs. Forty percent of all people served locally by our Food Bank member agen-

cies are children. Our motto at CEO is "People Helping People". The impressive result of "Scouting for Hunger" demonstrates the rewards of "children helping children".

Thanks to the area Scouts, leaders, families, volunteers, businesses and organizations that helped with this massive food collection drive.

Gene Brady  
Executive Director  
Commission on Economic Opportunity

### Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



The tiny percentage of the local population who listened to the old WEJL and WBAX AM radio stations woke to a surprise a few weeks ago, when the stations switched from a "music of your life" (if you're over 80) format to ESPN Sports Radio. As a casual sports fan, I was happy to learn that scores and statistics would be available at the touch of a button. Boy, was I in for a surprise.

If you've happened upon either of these stations during the day, when there aren't any games on, you already know what I'm about to say is true. There isn't enough decent sports news around to fill an hour, never mind a day's broadcast. An inveterate channel surfer at home or in the car, I now know more than I care to about the fashion statements made by uniforms, the sex lives of athletes, the inner lives (such as they are) of broadcasters and the thickness of "sports journalist" skin. I put that in quotes because listening to the ramblings of the ESPN personalities has reinforced my belief that "sports journalist" is an oxymoron if there ever was one. (Okay, the moron part could stand alone.)

I'm not saying that excellent reporting and writing about sports doesn't appear every day. It's just that there's so little of it that the good work should be valued like a gold nugget in a pile of dung, which gives you some idea of my opinion of most day's ESPN radio broadcast. To be fair, it's not the broadcasters' fault — there's only so much interesting sports material to go around, so they must try desperately to make each segment (and thus, their contribution) sound important, indispensable and compelling. And if anyone dares challenge their self-assessment, there's Hell to pay, as early this week when one host lit into a new book about ESPN that is apparently less than flattering. Now there's a response that's worthy of a journalist, even if the material isn't.

### Don't pin Harveys Lake sewer woes on one man

Editor,

In reply to the letter to the Editor in the April 5, issue of *The Dallas Post*. I am also a rate payer in the Harveys Lake Municipal Authority (HLMA) and I do not wish to see my sewer bill raised. The blame is being placed on only one person (e.g. General Manager/Mayor). That person has to answer to and follow the directions of the HLMA board. The board has to approve or disapprove all bills paid, and the action

of the general manager.

I do not know if the HLMA can release the customer listing to the public, but I doubt very much if they can release the monies paid or owed by each customer as this is personal information that should only be available to the individual customer, the HLMA, or its collection agency, except by court order. Also the rate payers, as I am, are also partially responsible for not attending the meetings which are normally held on

the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. There are very few people that attend these meetings of which we are also guilty.

As much as we and I am sure everyone else is concerned over the end results of this situation and the effect it may have on our sewer bills, we also have to realize that while litigation is going on (re: monies owed DAMA) that the HLMA is not free to discuss certain issues. When all is said and done, hopefully in favor of HLMA,

we will be informed of all facts involved. If not found in favor of HLMA, that would be the time to take HLMA to task.

Supposedly, according to our constitution, everybody is innocent until proven guilty. In other words in my opinion, don't listen to gossip, as the court would say it is only hearsay, get the facts which we will find out when it is all over.

W. Monk  
Harveys Lake Borough

### Library news



Carol King

Computer classes The computer classes publicized recently were immediately filled. There is a long waiting list at the library for new classes as they are organized; you may wish to add your name. Inquire at the front desk.

An enthusiastic audience of children and parents happily participated in the program, "Cinderella's Storyland: an Interactive Show by Kit's Kaboodle," held April 12 in celebration of National Library Week. Kitty

## Computer classes fill up quickly

Jones, as Cinderella, held us all enthralled.

The 12th Annual Luncheon with a Special Author will be held Thursday, April 27, at the Apple Tree Terrace at Newberry Estate, Dallas. If you call the library at 675-1182 you may still be able to reserve a place at this festive spring occasion. The luncheons feature a published author with local ties. This year she is Liza Nelson, daughter of June and the late Charles Nelson of Kingston, who will tell us about her first novel, "Playing Botticelli." Proceeds benefit the library. We look forward to a delightful afternoon of good conversation and excellent food, as well as an introduction to a new author and her work.

Meeting announcements: The Monday morning book discussion group will meet on April 24 to give

their views on Tom Brokaw's book, "The Greatest Generation." The evening group meets at 7 p.m. that night and will discuss Cider House Rules by John Irving.

The Auction Committee will meet on Tuesday, April 25, at 7 p.m.

The new display in the case at the library consists of some very attractive antiques. They are a sampling of those that will be found at the Prince of Peace Church's 48th Annual Antique Show and Flea Market. The show is open on Tuesday, May 2, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and on Wednesday, May 3, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lunch will be served on both days and includes homemade soups, sandwiches, and the wonderful pies made by the church women. A dinner will also be served on Tuesday evening. For more informa-

tion, call the Prince of Peace Episcopal Church, Dallas, at 675-1723.

Many of you have already become acquainted with Janet Bauman, the new assistant in the children's library. Janet was born in Forty Fort and graduated from Central Catholic (now Bishop O'Reilly) High School in Kingston. She received a B.A. degree in English Literature, with a concentration in writing, from Wilkes College. Janet is a lector at St. Ignatius Church, and was formerly on the Board of Directors of Ballet Northeast. She and her husband John live in Kingston. Their daughters are attending the main campus of Penn State at University Park; Jennifer is a junior, and Laura is a freshman.

Welcome, Janet, to the Back Mountain Memorial Library!

### Do you agree? Disagree?

Editorials are the opinion of the management of The Dallas Post. We welcome your opinion on contemporary issues in the form of letters to the editor. If you don't write, the community may never hear a contrasting point of view. Send letters to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612, fax them to (570) 675-3650 or send them by e-mail to dalpost@aol.com. Please include your name, address and a daytime phone number so that we may verify authenticity. We do not publish anonymous letters, but will consider withholding the name in exceptional circumstances. We reserve the right to edit for length and grammar.

## The Dallas Post

Published Weekly By Bartsen Media, Inc.  
P.O. Box 366, Dallas, PA 18612  
570-675-5211

Ronald A. Bartizek  
PUBLISHER

Charlotte E. Bartizek  
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER  
OFFICE MANAGER

Ken Brocius  
ADVERTISING ACCT. EXEC

Kasia McDonough  
REPORTER

Ruth Proietto  
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Joanna Cease  
OFFICE/TYPIST/CLASSIFIEDS



### LEGISLATORS DIRECTORY

#### Federal Officials

**Representative Paul E. Kanjorski** (Democrat)  
Wilkes-Barre: 825-2200  
Washington: (202) 225-6511  
e-mail: paul.kanjorski@hr.house.gov # 400M, 7 N. Wilkes-Barre Blvd., Wilkes-Barre PA 18702 or 2353 Rayburn Building, Washington, DC 20515  
**Senator Arlen Specter** (Republican)  
Wilkes-Barre: 826-6265  
Washington: (202) 224-4254

e-mail: senator\_specter@specter.senate.gov  
116 South Main Street, Wilkes-Barre PA 18701  
or 711 Hart Senate Office Bldg., Washington, DC 20510  
**Senator Rick Santorum** (Republican)  
Scranton: 344-8799  
Washington: (202) 224-6324  
Fax: (202) 228-4991  
e-mail: senator@santorum.senate.gov  
527 Linden St., Scranton, PA 18503  
120 Russell Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510

#### State Officials

**State Senator Charles D. Lemmond** (Republican)  
(717) 675-3931  
e-mail: smurphy@pasen.gov  
22 Dallas Shopping Ctr., Memorial Hwy., Dallas PA 18612-1231  
**State Representative George Hasay** (Republican)  
287-7505 or 542-7345 or 474-2276 or 477-3752  
119 S. Mountain Blvd., Mountaintop PA 18707

Hasay's district encompasses: Harveys Lake, Lehman Township, Jackson Township, Lake Township, Franklin Township, Ross Township, and Dallas Township's north voting district.  
**State Representative Phyllis Mundy** (Democrat)  
283-9622 or 655-3375  
Suite 113, 400 Third Avenue, Kingston PA 18704  
Mundy's district encompasses: Dallas Borough, Dallas Township except for the north voting district, and Kingston Township.