

Police

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the residents of Alsace township have approached Central Berks about coverage.

Central Berks became involved with a regional youth aid panel, which judges and sets punishments at the local level rather than through the county juvenile system. The panel involves four municipalities. This regional panel wouldn't have been possible without consolidation, Spear said.

Equipment use also became an issue for the consolidated force. At Central Berks, the department purchased new hand radios for the officers to give everyone the same equipment. Weapons also had to be standardized throughout the new department. Shirk said he phased in the equipment and upgrades over time. Spear said he started to assign two officers to each car. "They treated the

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Regina Skrincosky
Mayor, Mt. Penn Township

cars like they were their own. It improved morale."

Taxpayers in Central Berks have been pleased with the results of the consolidation. "We haven't had to raise taxes because of the police," said Mount Penn Mayor Regina Skrincosky. "Mount Penn hasn't necessarily

saved money, but it would have cost more. We couldn't afford to pay what the surrounding areas were paying. (Now) Citizens are getting the same service as if it were their own."

Resolving pension issues was the biggest problem Susquehanna faced. "It seemed like forever," said Shirk. Skrincosky said it took a year to iron out the pension problems for Central Berks.

For Central Berks, identity was an issue. "The three municipalities really wanted to do this, but the biggest fear was loss of identity," said Skrincosky. "Townships have a bigger problem than boroughs, because townships will grow."

Central Berks has modified its policing philosophy since regionalizing. Spear said he had the biggest problem getting the offic-

ers to understand the idea of community policing, which involves the community and elected officials. "We went from being reactive to pro-active. We've become more problem solving," he said.

Both Shirk and Skrincosky recommend openness in keeping the regionalization process moving ahead. "Let the people know what's going on," said Shirk. "Get the men on board first."

"Move quick but not too quick," said Skrincosky. She said she always reported progress to the Mount Penn council.

In the end, sailing for the consolidated forces has been relatively smooth. "Since we've been up and running we haven't had one complaint," said Shirk.

"We were ahead of the game by doing it when we did," said Skrincosky.

Councilman wants more towns included in study

By **BILL GOODMAN**
Post Staff

DALLAS - Dallas Borough Council member Dennis Garvey has concerns about plans to study the consolidation of Dallas Township and Dallas Borough police forces.

"I'm not against regionalization. I'm against the procedure," he said. "We need to walk not run."

His biggest concern, he said, was that the meetings were held without notifying the public. "This is a matter of public safety."

Garvey would like to see the issue voted on by more than the council. "I want to see a referendum to allow Dallas borough residents to vote," he said.

Garvey feels the focus of the regionalization should be different than what is currently being proposed. Meetings, he said, were held with Dallas Township and no one else. "Regionalization is de-

"Why waste the study on the two largest areas? Why not include everybody?"

Dennis Garvey
Dallas Borough Council member

signed to help areas that can't afford it. Why waste the study on the two largest areas? Why not include everybody?" he asked.

Consolidation, he said, should be a five-year plan. "We've made a commitment to our police. They're well equipped and well trained." Garvey noted that grants have been used to fund many improvements, including a new four-wheel-drive vehicle, weapons and computers for the officers, and a breathalyzer unit and training for it.

"I don't want to see the borough suffer," Garvey said.

Pen pals

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The students really look forward to meeting and entertaining the residents.

"I was so excited I couldn't sleep last night," said Hilary Hoover. "My favorite part was meeting my pen pals," she added during her visit.

The second grade students brought smiles to the faces of many of the residents and staff during the entertainment. The children danced the macarena, the chicken dance and the YMCA. They finished by singing "You're a Grand Old Flag."

"I'm very proud of the children," said John Belinka, a Lakeside resident. "I just love them," he explained as he handed each child a wrapped butterscotch candy.

The students also toured the

facility and sang "Happy Birthday" to resident Jean Phillips.

"I wish we had a present for her," said Jamie Bartoo. "I guess our song was a present," she reflected.

Debbie Adams, Assistant Activities Director at Lakeside, gave each child a special thank you card from the residents. She really endeared herself to the children when she introduced them to the residents' pet dog, Smokey.

"That was my favorite part," said Deanna Krzywicki.

The sight of so many happy faces, both young and old, indicates that this is a tradition well worth continuing. "The residents really enjoy it when they come up here each year," concluded Jean Stang Activities Director.



POST PHOTO/M.B. GILLIGAN

Jason Belinka, a Lakeside Nursing Center resident, exchanged "high fives" with Frank Warman and Billy Yedesko.

Crisis

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over the weekend. Neither of the students was a registered driver.

It was believed that a dog or other animal ran in front of the car, causing the driver to swerve off the road. Oliver said the state police were still reconstructing the accident scene.

"We pride ourselves in taking care of the kids. To lose one in this way is devastating. It's very frustrating," said Oliver.

The school used a statewide crisis response team to assist in managing the accident. Bob Roberts, Lake-Lehman middle level principal, was recently trained in crisis intervention. He helped develop the plan the school used to respond to the accident. Roberts, along with Dallas High School principal Frank Galicki, are members of the Principals Emergency Response Team. PERT trains principals, guidance counselors, mental health professionals and nurses to deal with crises that could happen at any school, from an attack on the school to a natural disaster.

On Wednesday night, the faculty was called together. On Thursday morning, the announcement was made to the student body about the accident by Oliver. Information was passed out to teachers. The plan gave guide-

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John Oliver
Principal
Lake-Lehman High School

lines on how to communicate with the press and the community. "In general, it helped us structure and maintain the day," said Oliver.

"It's a very comprehensive plan," said Roberts. "It can be as simple or as complex as the situation demands. It's good to know that people would be here to help in an hour or two. You hope you never have to use it, but it's good to know it's there."

PERT is divided into north, south, east and west regions. Members of the eastern region would have been at the school to assist if necessary.

Oliver said he didn't know what steps could be taken, if any, to prevent this from happening again. "The easiest way would be to restrict freedoms," he said. Currently, the students are allowed to use the gymnasium or go

outside after they're done eating lunch. "They need time away from the classroom. Schools aren't designed to be prisons." Students are supervised, he said. "Our kids are responsible enough to handle their freedoms."

The student that left the school did so during the lunch period. Freedoms will continue as long as

they aren't abused. "That's what we need to assess now," said Oliver.

Both Roberts and Oliver were focused on the future. "On the surface, things went well," said Roberts.

"You deal with the situation, make sure the kids are okay, and move on," said Oliver.

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