

Tax collector

(continued from page 1)

where the school taxes go. Rose believes they're put to good use. "I'm very happy with Dallas," she said. Castellani, whose children also attended the Dallas schools, agrees.

When Castellani applied for the position 18 years ago, she was one of 29 hopefuls, she said. "The elected was Vern Pritchard; he'd had it for 20 years, and people assumed that the pay rate would be the same — based on a percentage — but then a lot of them withdrew when they realized it was going to be on a salary basis." Some tax collectors get a percentage of bills collected, while others receive a set salary; the method of pay is up to the school district.

Vern Pritchard, the previous tax collector, worked out of his Nationwide Insurance office on Carverton Road. According to Castellani, "People still stop there. They say, 'Is this where I pay the taxes? I know my father came here!' And even now, people keep going down to the magistrate's office — they think I stay there." The tax collector's office has been located in the new Kingston Twp. municipal building since it was built approximately two and a half years ago.

The day she started was chaotic, Castellani said. "Even the township was surprised that first day. See, between Vern Pritchard and I, Berkheimer did it for one year." Berkheimer was in Wilkes-Barre, and payments had to be made by mail, but many people didn't have checking accounts and wanted to pay cash, which required a trip to South Main St.

"I guess Berkheimer came out to the bank a couple of times during the rebate period, so when people saw that I was in on a Monday or whatever, there must have been 50 people lined up, because they thought I was only going to be there that one day."

Castellani laughed, remembering, "That first day...oh, my God! People were lined up — we only had chairs enough for four people; everybody else just stood there — and I'm brand-new! I didn't know what to do with the stamper — I was thinking, what have I got into?" She turned to a nervous-looking Rose and said reassuringly, "Now you may get eight to 10 people on the first day. Nothing like that."

LCCC conducting campus tours

Luzerne County Community College is conducting tours of the campus on Tuesdays at 9 a.m. Participants will receive an overview of the College's programs of study, financial aid information, and a tour of the campus. Groups, agencies, or anyone wishing to tour Luzerne County Community College, should call the Admissions Office at 740-0337 or (800) 377-LCCC, extension 337.

"You get one subdivision finished and you think, 'Oh, it'll be all right for a while,' and then somebody new pops up!"

Janice Castellani
Retiring tax collector

Castellani said, "It always amazes me how the day you mail in bills — I mean, there'll be people who get it at 10 o'clock in the morning and are up here by noon to pay it — they want to know if they're first!" But Castellani says the early birds are preferable by far to "people who call six months later and say, 'I can't find my bill!'"

"Generally people are very nice," Castellani said. "You may have one or two in the year who will give you a hard time, but it's people who end up having to pay a penalty anyway; they want to blame it on me instead of taking responsibility for themselves." And she said, "It makes you feel good when people say 'thank you.' Otherwise, you wonder, 'why am I doing this?'"

Bills are mailed the first week of February, Castellani said. From then until April 7 the tax bills are at discount phase (2 percent off); between then and June 7 they are at face value. After that, the bills are in the 10 percent penalty phase. "When you get a \$2000 school bill, and you have to add \$200 — it hurts!" Castellani said.

When she first started at the job, Castellani said, one day "the secretary, she called me at home and said, 'You can't believe the pile of mail you've got here! You know, you get 40, 50 letters. I said, 'well, look, I'll come down and work on them,' rather than wait until the next business day, because by then you'd have another pile of mail!"

Rose says most people send their taxes in by mail; she and Castellani estimate the number to be 80 percent, including mortgage companies, which send in the taxes for homeowners.

"Mortgage companies — you might get a stack of 100 [bills] and one check for all of it, and you hope they're all right, because otherwise you have to turn around and either send money back, or ask for more if there's a mistake," Castellani said. She said it's necessary to keep a running record of

which banks taxpayers have their mortgages with. "I'd have a card table full of shoeboxes with all the different banks. And I'd sort them out and throw them in. But then everything got paid, and it got paid during rebate."

These days conscientious banks are as obsolete as Castellani's shoebox filing system; she said many are seldom concerned about sending taxes in time for the rebate period: "These bigger servicing companies, they don't care. They're willing to pay that extra."

The tax collection office has been using a computer system since 1989; prior to that everything was done by hand. Working on a computer, said Castellani, is much easier. "When you get to the end of the year and you ask the computer what's the unpaid balance, it's right there. And it has to be right."

Although the window hours at the tax collection office are Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the tax collectors do a lot of work at other hours, often at home. Castellani said, "People think that once they pay their bill, that you're done: 'Oh, now you're going to have it easy.' Oh, no. It's a year-round job." Tax collectors have to keep the records in order — people move in, move out, die; land is subdivided, new properties are added — it's an ongoing process. Subdivisions are a particular headache, Castellani says: "You get one subdivision finished and you think, 'Oh, it'll be all right for a while,' and then somebody new pops up! It takes two, three years to get it all sold off and everybody in the book."

"You have to do whatever it takes to get the job done," Castellani said. "But the more familiar with it you are, the easier it gets," she assured Rose. She added that in order to do the job well, you have to be organized — "and a good memory helps!"

Kingston Twp. Winter Parking Ordinance

Kingston Twp. Police Chief James Balavage would like to remind residents the Twp. Winter Parking Ordinance is currently in effect until March 31, 2001. Under this ordinance residents are prohibited from parking vehicles on Township streets between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. daily. The ordinance is designed to keep the Twp. streets open and clear so that snow removal measures can be effectively undertaken by the Public Works Dept.

The Chief also reminds residents that vehicles are not permitted to be parked on Twp. streets during snow storms, or for 8 hours after the end of a storm. The Chief urges all Twp. residents to cooperate in complying with the Ordinance to avoid enforcement measures. Residents with questions may contact Chief Balavage at 696-1175.

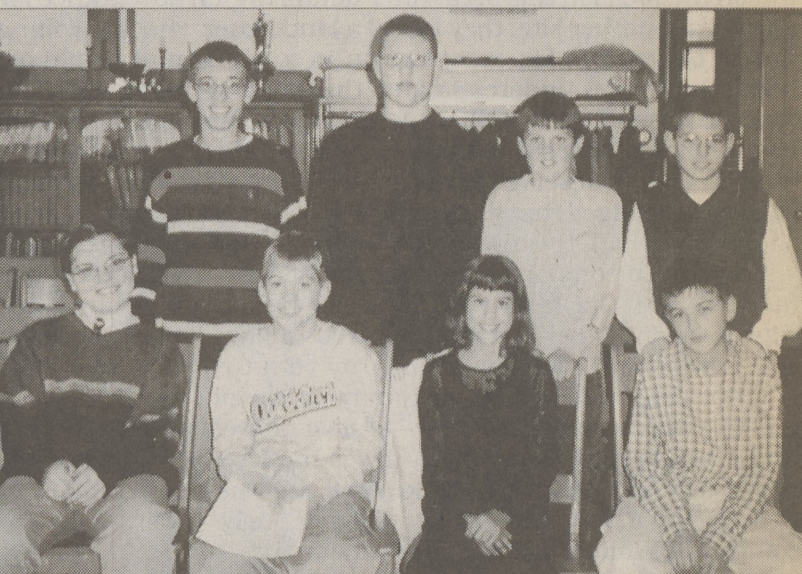
Dallas UMC Sunday School's Christmas show

The Dallas United Methodist Sunday School recently presented its annual Christmas show. This year's was titled "Love Came Down at Christmas." There was an offertory taken to help feed the hungry.

The sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students played "Silent Night" and "Away in a Manger" with Tone Chimes. Pictured are, left to right, front row: Tony Banta, William Barnes, Amanda Blom, Kevin Kottle. Back row: Adam Cottle, Jason Jolley, John Ashley, and Gerrid Kohli.



The pre-school and kindergarten class participated in the Christmas Story as read by Karen Justus. Shown in the nativity scene are, from left to right: Trevor Ahouse, Zachary Bevan, Drew Harding, Mylissa Goode, and Krista Zimmerman.



The first, second and third grade students presented their skit, "Waiting for a Turn" and sang "Mary, Mary" in the Nativity scene. They were accompanied by pianist Cathy Palfey. Shown, left to right, first row: Brandon Harding and Jamie Bartoo. Second row: Michael Kapolka, Matthew Blom, Nina Banta-Haas, Joshua Shilanski and Matthew Bevan. Third row: Haley Zimmerman, Laura Zimmerman, Sara Kohli and Joseph Kapolka. Fourth row: Sunday School teacher Dawn Harding, Keith Shumway, Dana Jolley, and Sunday School teacher Debbis Shilanski.



Sem annual Winter Instrumental Concert

The Wyoming Seminary Music Department will present the music of Tchaikovsky, Smith, Khachaturian, and other classical and jazz composers on Friday, Jan. 19 as part of its annual Winter Instrumental Concert. The concert will be performed at 8 p.m. in the Buckingham Performing Arts Center on the Upper School campus on North Sprague Ave. in Kingston. It is free and open to the public. For more information, call 270-2190.

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