



POST PHOTOS/HEATHER B. JONES

Lake Township Supervisors, from left, Lonnie Piatt, David Walkowiak and Bob Gray voted unanimously to dissolve the police department.

## Police

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Lake Township operates two departments, the police department and the roads department. Walkowiak said more money is needed for the roads department for vehicle and equipment purchases, and eliminating the police force would provide extra funds for the roads.

Police Chief John Maslowski has his own ideas of what was really behind the supervisors' decisions. For the first time, as a member of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the department was about to begin negotiations with the township for a new contract. "They don't want to negotiate, it's far better to just get rid of the police," Chief Maslowski said.

*"They don't want to negotiate, it's far better to just get rid of the police."*

**John Maslowski**  
Lake Twp. Police Chief

"They didn't even want to hear what the people wanted," he said.

John Fuches, the other full-time police officer, said three weeks ago Walkowiak told him he would not have a job at this time next year. Fuches said when he joined the Lake Township Police Department in 1997, he thought he had job security with the township. He does not know what he is going to do now.

"Obviously, the community will suffer," said part-time police officer Scott Baker.

Lehman Township Police Chief Kocher agreed. "It's a wide open town," he said. Kocher, a Lake Township resident, said he has personally waited 25 to 30 minutes for the Pennsylvania State Police to respond to a call. Lake Township Police response is under 10 minutes.

In lieu of a police force in Lake Township, all calls will be directed and responded to by the State Police located in Wyoming. Neighboring municipalities with police departments will assist the State Police, but the State Police must arrive first on the scene, said Harvey Lake Police Officer James Karłowicz.

"It makes me very upset," said Barb Mikielski, who is building a new home in Lake Township. She said when she heard of the possible disbanding of the police, she called her contractor and asked about a security system for her new house.

"I want the safety factor," Mikielski said. She thought resi-

## Corrections to DMS honor roll

The following students should have been listed in the July 18 edition of The Dallas Post as honor roll students at the Dallas Middle School. Sixth grade students receiving first honors for the fourth marking period are Amanda Saxon, Rachel Schaub, Adam Singer, Andrew Slocum, John Thompson, Amy Vodzak, Marissa Wright, Moira Yanik, and Megan Youells.

## Pentangelo completes course

Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Thomas Pentangelo, a 2000 graduate of Lake Lehman High School, Lehman, recently completed the Basic Food Service Course. During the course with Marine Corps Detachment, U.S. Army Quartermaster Center, Fort Lee, Va., students are taught basic food preparation, management and food services.

## Millie

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that time it would have been a blessing."

For the first month every doctor in the Wyoming Valley was called to try to figure out what had happened to this healthy child. Final the doctors agreed, it was viral encephalitis, Marion said.

Encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain most often caused by a viral infection. The specific viruses involved may vary from chicken pox to the polio virus. The virus can localize in the brain, causing inflammation of the brain cells and surrounding membranes. White blood cells invade the brain tissue as they try to fight off the infection. The brain tissue swells and can cause destruction of nerve cells, bleeding within the brain and brain damage, according to www.webmd.com. Encephalitis is uncommon and it affects approximately 1,500 people each year in the U.S.

"She was only 4 1/2 at the time, and the two boys were younger. It was tough," Marion said.

From the beginning the Attanasios were told to place Millie in some type of facility. The doctors said there was nothing more to be done for Millie except to send her away.

Marion refused to believe there was nothing to help Millie get better. So Marion and Carman took their daughter home and tried to care for her. "We brought her home and turned one room into a hospital room with a hospital bed and everything. We just devoted all our time to her and we had the two younger boys," said Marion.

As a young mother, Marion was taking on the weight of the world. She said the stress from Millie's illness almost gave her a nervous breakdown. It had gotten so bad at one point, Marion found the only way to cope was to literally bang her own head against a wall.

Marion's wake-up call came one day when the doctor came to visit Millie. "When the doctor came to the house, and he saw when she was having a seizure how our oldest son was reacting, he said, if you don't place Millie somewhere you are going to have hyperactive children and you're going to have a big problem."

So Marion agreed for the sake of the boys and also for her own well being, it was time to place Millie in a state facility. "Up until then, I kept thinking we were going to pull her out of it," she said, the sound of defeat still lingering after 40 years.

There has been no improvement in Millie's condition. She suffered severe brain damage and is profoundly retarded. Now 45, Millie lives in an adult body, but is still very much a child. She cannot sit up on her own, feed herself or even roll over in bed. Millie has spent the last 41 years, living this way.

The first state facility Millie was placed in was in West Chester. The facility required the family to give three days notification before a visit.

Marion remembers one afternoon. "We were going down to visit, and we got a call telling us,



Millie Attanasio before her illness.

don't come down there has been an accident," The Attanasios later learned Millie was left in the bathtub alone and was scalded.

Marion was furious, so she called State Rep. Shupnick and he helped have Millie placed at WHC in February of 1972.

"So we got her into White Haven and now we are so pleased. We can go in anytime we want," Marion said with a smile.

Her smile vanishes as she begins to talk about what could possibly be the fate of WHC. In a time of cost cutting and reorganization in the state's Office for Mental Retardation, cutting the number of patients at state facilities like WHC is a reality.

As of right now, the state has no plans to close WHC, said Tom Curran, facility director. Many of the individuals who were placed at WHC 20 or 30 years ago are now having their needs met by county programs instead of WHC, said Curran.

"Over the last 30 years the community has come a long way," Curran said. The average individual at WHC is 45 to 50 years old and Curran believes the change in attitude and the development of community pro-

## Options lead to home care

A person who is mentally retarded has more choices and opportunities in 2001 than in 1961.

One of the first steps in changing the lives of mentally retarded individuals came in 1966 with the Mental Health and Retardation Act. "It started changing attitudes of parents and consumers. Parents wanted to keep their children at home and care for them," said Jay Pagni, spokesperson for the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation.

The other big step came in 1972 with the Right to Education Act. The Right to Education Act gave the disabled the right to education and schooling.

Those two pieces of legislation helped revolutionize how people with mental retardation live. At one time, institutionalizing the mentally retarded was the only option. Today, a lot of services are offered at the community level.

"Let's give the family control of services they need," is Pennsyl-

vania's philosophy Pagni said, because the relatives know best what the individual wants and needs.

In a state effort to realign resources and staff into a community system, many individuals from state run facilities are being placed in county-run programs.

"We try to smooth the adjustment period as much as possible," said Tom Curran, facility director at White Haven Center.

The planning process begins a year or more before a transfer, said Curran. From the family to facility staff to county workers are involved in the process and the likes, dislikes, needs, wants and anticipated problems are taken into account, he said. It is a very detailed planning process.

"This is a person centered process," Pagni said. "Before anyone would be moved from a facility, we sit down with families and they work with us in setting something up to best meet the needs of the individual."

grams has also changed the needs for places like WHC.

Out of the 70,000 people with mental retardation in the state, Curran said only 1,600 to 1,800 are in state centers like WHC. Institutionalizing mentally retarded people is a last choice today. Curran said WHC has only admitted two to three individuals within the last two years.

But for families like the Attanasios, the possibility of closing places like WHC feels like a numbers game. "They say it's supposed to save money, but it's not," Marion is convinced.

"I don't want this to be a political thing, because these are human beings. It's bad enough having a child like this or a sister or a brother in places like this without having to worry about them being put out of a place that takes such good care of them," Marion said.

Marion said she used to be quiet, backward, and even bashful, but she cannot afford to be that way any longer. "I've had to fight so hard for her through the years that I say what I think anymore and if it hurts the wrong people, I'm sorry, but sometimes they need a rude

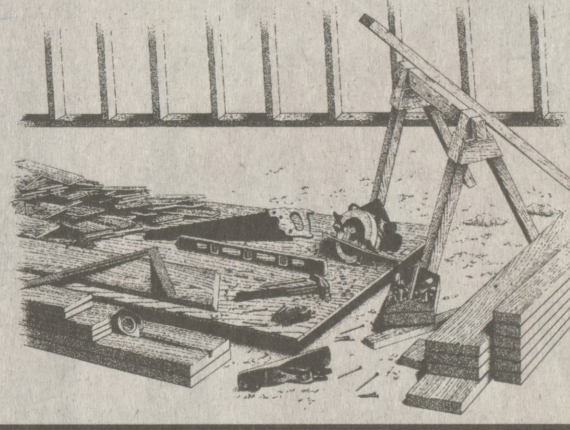
awakening. That's where these people need help, they can't speak for themselves."

Marion writes state representatives, senators and Governor Tom Ridge on a regular basis about the need for places like White Haven Center. She keeps copies of court cases which are similar to what she can foresee happening to the residents at WHC. Marion is prepared to fight to keep the place her little girl has called home for the past 29 years.

"When you have someone like we do that can't speak for themselves, can't even turn over in bed herself, can't even feed herself, you have to be alert and keep fighting to make sure they get good care," Marion said.

No one has approached the Attanasio family about moving Millie to another facility, but they have heard stories from other families. "It's beginning to be an uphill battle. I don't want to see the place closed," she said.

But Marion Attanasio has become a crusader who is ready for any battle she must fight to guarantee her daughter the best possible home and care.



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