

**Business**

(continued from page 1)

Back Mountain has always been somewhat of a bedroom community, there has always been industry. She believes that is changing, and to the detriment of the area.

"The Back Mountain always had offices, and industry, so there was a balance. The concern now is that the balance has tipped," said Banta.

It was Banta's Twin Stacks property that both Epix moved from, leaving a temporary hole to fill and taking 170 employees with them.

She and others in the business community say they worry that with industry and larger companies moving out of the area, the ability of smaller businesses to thrive is compromised.

"The real blow is those 170 people went to lunch, laid away jewelry at the jewelry store; not any more," commented Banta.

In addition to Commonwealth, other large companies have eliminated jobs. They say they are stable now — even in an upswing — however, they also show a steady list of job cuts.

In the 1980s Payne Printery, incorporated in 1959, was expanding at such a rate it outgrew its facility on the corner of Lake St. and Centerhill Road and built a much larger location across from what is now Twin Stacks.

"The company at one point was double the size it is now," said Frank Cuniuf, Chief Financial Officer.

He said over the course of the

*"If you have 400 more people working in the Back Mountain and they need to pick something up, they stop at the local stores. When those jobs move out of the area, well what moves with them is all the local buying power they had."*

**Lynn Banta**

President, Back Mt. Business & Professional Association

last recession the company went from 100 employees to 60 and now employs 50. He said the company is stable now and sees only short-term, temporary layoffs that correspond to fluctuations in print orders.

"This is a really good example of a company that's come a long way," said Cuniuf, adding that the company has been experiencing substantial sales growth in the past year. "We do see that we're going to continue to grow and there will be additional opportunities at our company for employment," he said.

Cuniuf said that being in the Back Mountain is an advantage for Payne. He said most of their competitors are in New Jersey and New York; "costs in those markets are generally higher, because overhead is higher," he said.

Commonwealth and Epix, on the other hand, found moving out of the Back Mountain to Wilkes-Barre to take advantage of a tax-free Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) zone to be more profitable.

Commonwealth Telephone

Enterprises (CTE), the parent company of Commonwealth Telephone, Epix, CTSI, and Jack Flash dsl, still has offices in the Back Mountain.

Out of the corporation's 1,200 employees, about 350 jobs are still within Dallas, said David G. Weselcouch, Senior Vice President of investor relations and corporate communications.

Weselcouch said that since 2000, CTE has both eliminated positions and moved jobs corporate wide, cutting the numbers of jobs in the Back Mountain. (Weselcouch didn't have specific Back Mountain figures).

In addition to Commonwealth Telephone and Epix moving entirely to Wilkes-Barre within the last two years, 300 positions were eliminated in 2000. In 2001, employees were moved out of Dallas to other locations.

In the first quarter of 2002, 100 employees were offered voluntary retirement. This year 75 positions in Dallas, almost exclusively management, were cut as part of a "realignment," We-

selcouch said. "There has been a slight decline in the number of jobs in Dallas."

Weselcouch said the decisions to eliminate or move jobs were "related to strategy and or to space considerations."

"We're organized today in a manner that would allow us to be productive and efficient," said Weselcouch.

Weselcouch said he doesn't see the likelihood of adding positions in the near future, but he doesn't see any changes to the negative either.

Energy Converters Inc. will close entirely in March, leaving 100 employees without work and unlikely to find similar work in the Back Mountain.

Founded in 1973, Encon also had a period of high productivity that dwindled in recent years. At the time it completed a 20,000 foot expansion in 1997, Encon employed 230 people. By January of 2003, the number had been reduced to 100.

"The business association and people who are affiliated depend on the medium and small businesses out here, because it brings more traffic," said Tony Macri, past BMBPA president and owner of Overbrook restaurant.

Banta agrees. "If you have 400 more people working in the Back Mountain and they need to pick something up, they stop at the local stores. When those jobs move out of the area, well what moves with them is all the local buying power they had," she said.

**Learn to be a lifeguard at YMCA**

The Greater Pittston YMCA will be starting a New Lifeguarding Class, on the Guard II on March 8. Learn the aquatic safety to prevent accidents and to save lives in and around water.

This program is for anyone 16 years of age or older who has good swimming skills, you must be able to do front crawl, breast stroke, side stroke (left and right sides) elementary back stroke.

Classes start Saturday, March 8 and run for eight weeks from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jerry Yakobitis is the Certified Lifeguard Instructor. CPR and First Aid is required and will be taught. Participants must attend all 8 classes.

For more information call the Greater Pittston YMCA at 655-2255.

**PROPERTY TRANSFERS**

The following property transfers were recorded at the Luzerne County Courthouse the week of January 24-Feb. 5, 2003.

Francis McManus et ux to Joseph Nardone Sr. et ux, see deed, Dallas Twp., \$280,000.

Mark C. Smart et ux to David W. Trego et al, see deed, Dallas Twp., \$325,000.

Constance M. Peters to Catherine Marzouca, Lot 10 pt Lot 11, Dallas Twp., \$109,000.

James Powell to Ronald Matusiak Jr. et ux, 1.66 ac Lot 1, Dallas Twp., \$305,000.

David Schuler et ux to Shawn J. Pulver, Lot 48, 48B North View, Harveys Lake Bor., \$7,000.

Joseph Borosky et ux to Shawn J. Pulver, Lot 103A North View, Harveys Lake Bor., \$4,000.

Gerald Schraeder et ux to Sid Halsor et, 2.566 acres, Harveys Lake Bor., \$227,500.

Wayne J. Evelo et ux to Michael A. Kotulski, Lot 3, Harveys Lake Bor., \$38,500.

Donald Britt et ux to Asa J. Krashnak, 1.5 acres, Kingston Twp., \$150,000.

Sid Paul Halsor et ux to Gary

Navestad et ux, 19 Shaver Ave., Kingston Twp., \$110,000.

Daniel J. McCabe et al to John R. Rjce, see deed, Kingston twp., \$57,000.

Vincent Locascia et ux to Suzanne Morris, see deed, Kingston Twp., \$90,000.

Carol A. Martin trustee to Kimberly A. Marth, Lot 36A, Kingston Twp., \$76,900.

Joseph Mizzer et ux to Glenn Bozinski et ux, Lot 41 Sunrise Est., Kingston Twp., \$190,000.

Robert Smith, co partner to Bryan M. Kull et ux, Lot 27 Windsor Farms, Kingston Twp., \$57,000.

Eli Shapiro et al to Brian Caracino et ux, Lot 29 Hillbrook Frms, Kingston Twp., \$425,000.

Charles Kamus et ux to James Ratoski et ux, Lot 30, Kingston Twp., \$140,000.

Charles Gelsco co partner to Victor Spaciano Jr., lot 19 Winsdor Farms, Kingston Twp., \$76,000.

Henry J. Zielski Jr. to David Wood et ux, Lot 2 Deer Meadows, Lehman Twp., \$52,008.

W.H. Conyngham & Co., Inc. to William Conyngham et ux, lot 1 Hayfield Farms, Lehman Twp., \$16,500.



Carol King

**Young adults program March 8 at library**

**Daffodil Day:** The library is again assisting the American Cancer Society in promoting its annual Daffodil Day! The flowers are priced at \$7 for a bunch of ten daffodils. Orders must be placed at the front desk by February 28, and will be available for pickup on March 19-21. Think spring!

**Librarian's report:** The annual report to the Board of Directors provides many interesting statistics. Net proceeds from the 2002 Auction totaled \$70,163.75. The Friends of the Library organized a half dozen activities and fund raisers, including the Spring Luncheon, which brought in over \$21,500. Volunteer hours were estimated at 8,314, but probably the true total was much greater. The total circulation figure for the year was 94,184; 2,876 books and materials were added to the library collection; and active borrowers for the year numbered 176,757.

**New display:** The new display consists of some lovely tea sets, loaned by mother and daughter Ellen and Emily Machovec.

**Book review:** The Monday morning book discussion group read "The Founding Brothers," by Joseph J. Ellis, in January. It

dealt with six different episodes and sets of personalities in the early history of our country — the duel between Hamilton and Burr; the dinner at Jefferson's home at which two major topics were discussed: the assumption of national debts by the states, and the location of the future site of the new nation's capitol; the "silence" about the troubling topic of slavery, reached by members of Congress fearful that, if faced head-on, would deal a mortal blow to the country; George Washington's precedent-setting farewell address; John Adams's administration and political partnership with his wife, Abigail; and the friendship and fascinating correspondence between Jefferson and Adams.

It was agreed that the detail in which these historic events and personalities were described made them more real. There was a division of opinion as to the style of writing; the majority felt it was masterful, a minority found it soporific. Comparisons with modern politicians were inevitably made in our discussion, and we commented on the strength of the women in Ellis's work.

Mary Higgins Clark's first book, "Mt. Vernon Love Story," was recommended for reading by the group.

The next program in the YA series is a babysitting course offered by the American Red Cross on Saturday, March 8, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Participants will learn how to perform first aid and get professional help fast; to identify common safety hazards and prevent injuries; to perform basic care routines like diapering, feeding and dressing; to handle bedtime issues, and more.

The cost per person is \$25 and includes a babysitter's handbook. Checks should be made out to the American Red Cross. Interested young adults, ages 12 to 18, are invited to stop in the library with their advance payments and register at the main desk or in the Children's Room. Call the library at 675-1182 if you have any questions.

**Computer classes:** Another series of computer classes will be held at the library starting Saturday, February 22. Call the library for further details. There is no fee, but attendance is limited, so register early.

**Trucksville Nursery School bookfair**

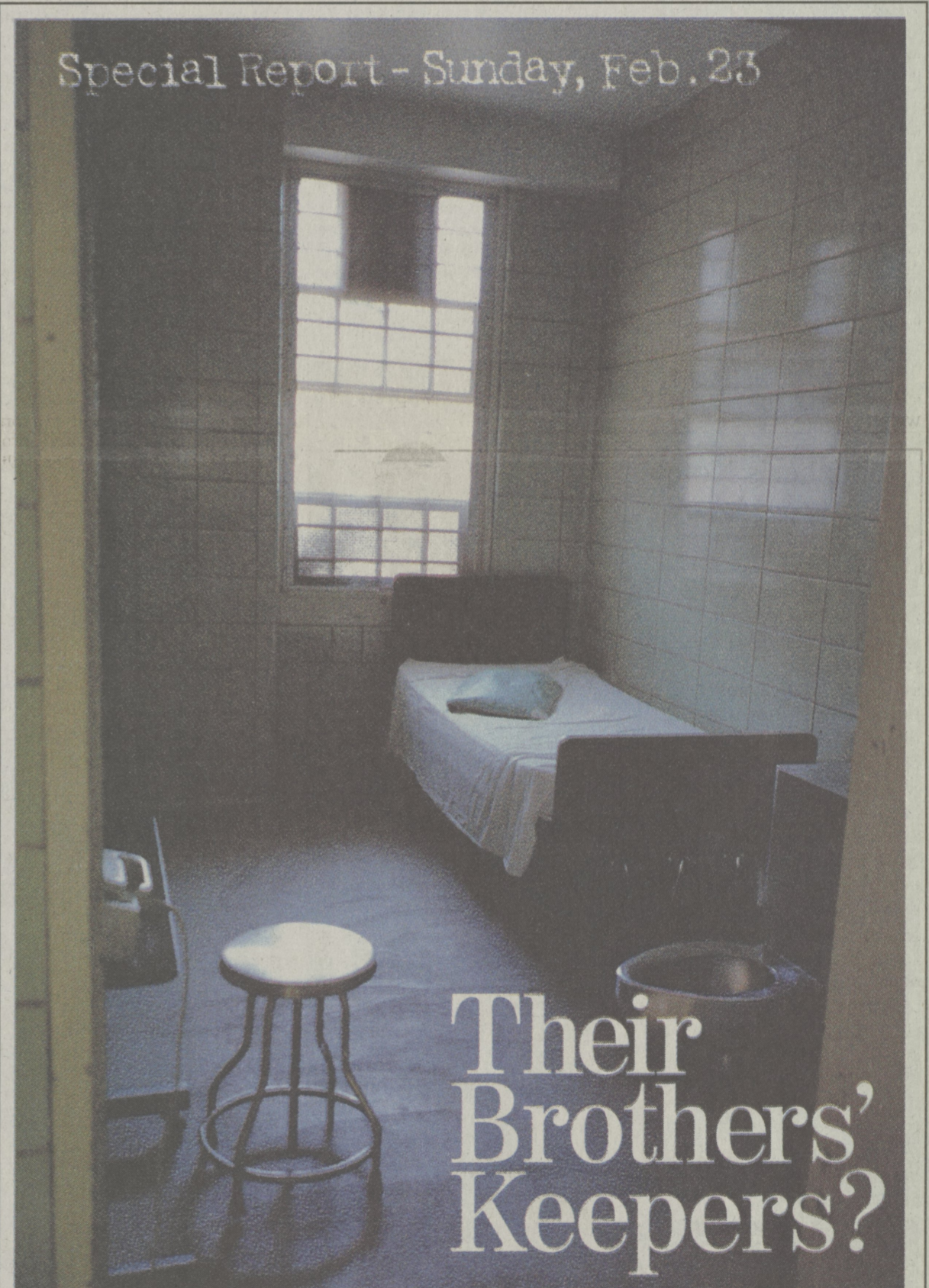
The Trucksville Nursery School Building Committee will sponsor a Bookfair at Barnes & Noble in the Arena Hub on Thursday, February 20 from 6-9 p.m. The Bookfair benefits their new Education Wing. Vouchers are needed and will not be available in the store. Please call 696-3899 to obtain vouchers or if you need additional information.

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Alone.

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