

Volunteers

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"I have to be honest, it took me by total surprise," he said about finding out screening is not required.

"As a principal and a board member, I feel that the process has to be in place — mandatory for people working with children."

Bigus, who is principal at Regis Elementary, said his school has required the checks for all school volunteers since 1999. The checks are repeated every five years on long-term volunteers.

He said he realizes background checks can't prevent every potential abuse, but said they provide some assurance.

The two reviews, Act 151, the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance and Act 34, the Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Records, have been in use since the 1980s.

Bigus said they have traditionally been used as a way to screen employment applicants, but over time that has begun to change. More and more, he said, they are used to screen volunteers.

"I don't think it's anybody's fault (that Dallas doesn't require them). I think it was just an oversight — it's been an evolution," he said.

The cost to complete the two checks is \$20 per volunteer.

"I just think it's proactive, not reactive. We have to be very careful who comes in our schools anymore."

Deborah Morgantini
School director

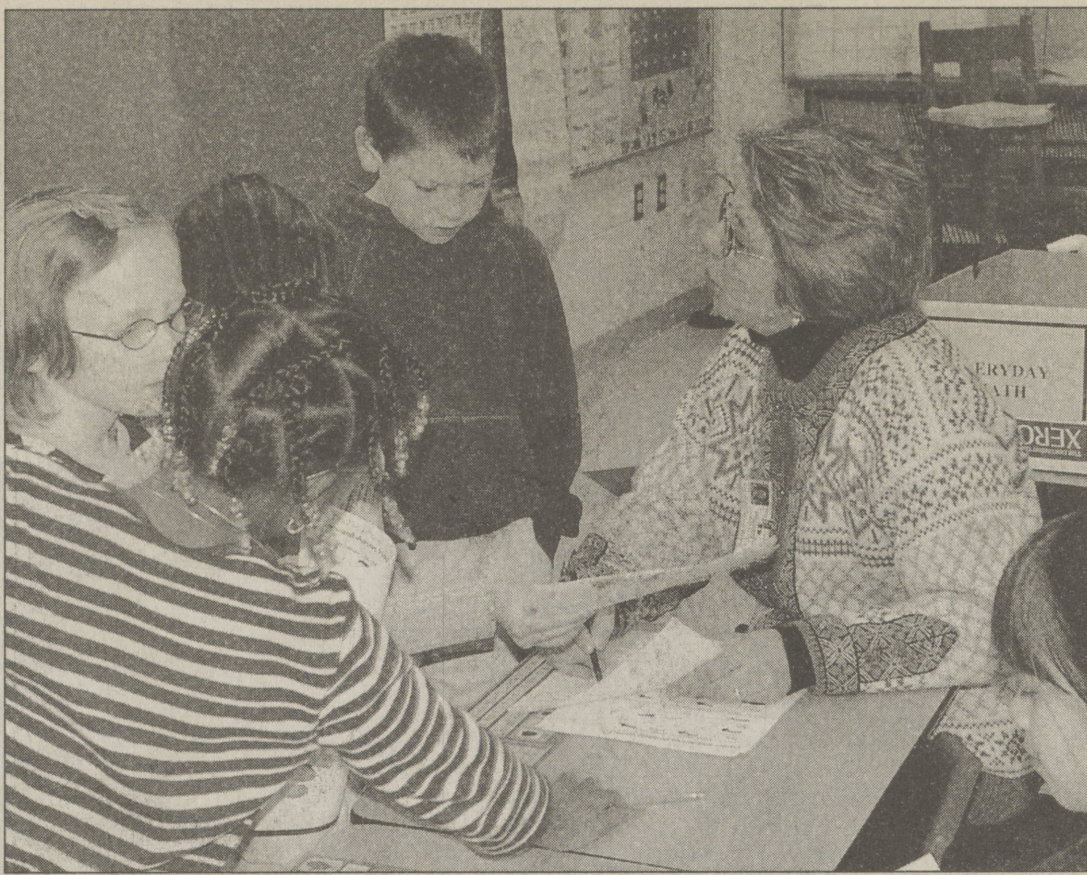
The district would have to decide whether to cover the cost, or pass it on to prospective volunteers.

Bigus said Regis covers the cost of getting clearances for those seeking employment, but not for those interested in volunteering. He admitted the plan could alienate prospective volunteers, but said that hasn't happened at his school.

"Anyone I've ever asked to complete the forms, they're signed sealed and delivered in a couple of days."

Griffiths said it would cost the district about \$3,000 annually to check all of its 150-200 volunteers.

Griffiths said he plans to survey the Parent Teacher Organization about whether they would like to start utilizing background checks. He expects to report his findings at the March 9 meeting.



POST PHOTO/ERIN YOUNGMAN

Mrs. Christiana Baron instructs second grade students during the afterschool remedial math program at Wycallis Elementary School. Dallas Middle School started a similar program in January.

Math

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to the district's elementary students. The grade school program has been in place for the past three years.

Through a new computer tracking program, teachers and members of the administration have identified students who are not meeting "proficient" status. NCLB will eventually require all children be at proficient or advanced levels.

The tracking program provides a detailed summary of the mathematical areas each student lags in and then groups the students together accordingly.

Approximately 135 children in grades 6-8 have been identified as being at tiers below "proficient."

"Surveys indicate that across the country there is a progressive decline. We recognize that."

Dr. Michael Speziale
Assistant Superintendent

The school sent home notices to those students before the winter break. To date, 25 percent have responded.

Speziale said the downward trend in standardized test scores from elementary to middle school is not uncommon.

"Surveys indicate that across the country there is a progressive decline. We recognize that," he said.

It's estimated the program will cost the district between \$2,800 and \$3,000, which will be paid for out of the general fund. District teachers will be utilized.

The program will be offered after school from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m., Mondays and Tuesdays. Parents will be responsible for transportation home.

The program will run until April and if it is successful, will be brought back in the fall for a full year, said Martinelli.

Post drop box in Dallas

The building that housed The Post until October has been sold, and the drop off box there has been closed. A box at the Uni-Mart in Dallas, across from the Dallas Shopping Center, remains open. News items, photos and other correspondence can be deposited there at any time. Please do not place cash or checks in the box.

The deadline for submissions is Tuesdays at 5 p.m.

POLICE BLOTTER

Crime watch chairman found guilty, fined for disorderly conduct

JACKSON TWP. — Crime Watch Chairman Edward Chesnovitch on Tuesday was found guilty of two summary charges of disorderly conduct after an incident at the township building involving the legality of campaign signs, according to a clerk in the office of District Justice James Tupper.

Jackson Township Zoning Secretary Joann Wright said she filed the charges on Nov. 3 after Chesnovitch "yelled because he had to pay 50 cents" for a list of people who paid \$30 for permits to post political campaign signs.

She said he was upset because the list was not updated and commissioner candidate Todd Vonderheid's sign was in a yard not on the list.

"He told me to go to the yard and personally remove the sign," she said. "Then he was screaming at me and told me I would be out of a job."

The fines total \$400 plus costs. Chesnovitch has the option of appealing Tupper's ruling within 30 days at Luzerne County court.

Man arrested for assault on woman

LAKE TWP. — Ray Edmond Hoopengardner, 42, of Wesley Road, was arrested Sunday night on charges of striking a woman in the face and pointing a gun at her, according to court papers.

State police said Hoopengardner assaulted Joan Marie Chamberlain, also of Wesley Road, after she entered the home Sunday night.

Chamberlain told police Hoopengardner threw her to the floor, struck her in the face, then pointed a shotgun at her, according to court papers.

Hoopengardner later threw her out of the residence and down the outside stairs, according to court papers.

Hoopengardner was arrested on charges of simple assault, recklessly endangering another person and harassment and stalking, according to court papers.

Ice golf

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completing the nine-hole course consisting of one par five, two par fours and the remaining par threes, takes about an hour.

"One of the reasons it's fun is there are canals through the weeds that serve as fairways," he said. The group is also keeping the area plowed so putting will go smoothly.

The event will be played in a "captain and crew" format,

opening the competition to everyone, including those without golfing experience.

Those less interested in the nine-hole competition, but who still want to participate, can pay \$5 a ball in a long drive contest.

Sobeck said money raised will go toward the association's ongoing projects and others that are still to be determined. He is currently soliciting ideas

for new projects from association members and the general public.

Some of the ongoing programs that will benefit from the day's proceeds are the buoy safety and trash can projects. The money will also go toward maintenance of the association's website.

Over the last year, the group has donated funds to the Lake-Noxen playground fund and the

Sewer

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into the system later in the year.

The action plan approved last month outlines three main tasks the authority and engineering firm will work on simultaneously. Much of the plan is being implemented now.

The tasks are:

- Continued identification of sources, locations and severity of groundwater infiltration.

- Evaluation of the sewer system's capacity.

- Implementation of borough and authority procedures, obligations, regulations, ordinances and corrective measures.

Smith said the authority and his firm are about halfway through the investigative portion of the plan. They still cannot estimate how much it will cost to make all the necessary repairs. "By the end of summer, or toward the end of the year, we hope to have all the answers we need," he said.

Smith said the authority has continued checking homes for illegal sump pump and down spout connections. The connections are thought to be adding to the excess amount of groundwater in the sewer lines. Hundreds of homes have been checked, but to date, only about 15 illegal connections have been found.

Smith stressed it is important for homeowners who have corrected their illegally connected sump pumps and downspouts to report the correction to the authority, for record-keeping purposes.

While homes being checked now are mostly those whose homeowners mailed in written consent, that could change come spring when the authority begins door-to-door inspections.

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A: Only in The Post

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Have a story idea? Please call, we'd like to hear about it.

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