

# Teacher allegedly involved with student resigns

By MARK GUIDISH  
For The Post

**DALLAS TWP.** — A Dallas High School teacher who allegedly had a sexual relationship with a student has resigned, and the School District is facing the threat of a lawsuit from the family of the girl involved.

At its regular work session Feb. 2, the board — with two

members absent — voted unanimously to accept the resignation of Greg Solfanelli, effective Jan. 28. Solfanelli has been on paid leave since Jan. 19 while the district conducted an investigation.

Superintendent Gilbert Griffiths read a brief statement saying no one could comment on the case for two reasons: It is still under investigation by police, and the district is facing “the threat of a lawsuit,” from the girl’s attorney.

Griffiths would not elaborate, but said the district has “received a letter” from the attorney,

and referred questions to School Board Solicitor Ben Jones III. Attempts to reach Jones on Monday night failed. Attempts to reach the girl’s attorney, C.J. Buffalino III, also failed.

Solfanelli’s resignation means the district will stop an internal investigation, but police are still looking into the matter and could file criminal charges.

Griffiths said Solfanelli’s resignation does not spare him from the risk of losing his teaching license. Everything the district learned so far will be forwarded to the state Department of Education, where the Professional Standards and Practices Committee would make that decision.

Griffiths, who is on that committee, has said losing his Pennsylvania license would also mean Solfanelli could not teach in 47 other states.

Solfanelli could also surrender his license before action is taken by the state, but Griffiths said that would make no difference. If Solfanelli later asked to have his license reinstated the standards committee would review all findings in the case before making a decision.

# Thefts

(continued from page 1)

group of persons,” said Balavage about the possible connection.

“We think they might be the same ones, but we haven’t been able to confirm it for sure.”

Court papers filed about the Dallas and Dallas Township thefts state:

Police were dispatched to the area of Parish Street at 2:46 a.m. for a report of two suspicious males walking toward Huntsville Road and checking cars for unlocked doors. When police approached, Willis was stopped and Bower fled on foot. Police then detained Willis, who had a blue compact disc player, an open pack of Phillies Berry Blunts and a cigarette D/C adaptor in his hands.

While searching Willis for weapons, police found large amounts of loose change in multiple pockets, flashlights and compact discs. He was then arrested.

While searching for the second suspect, police spotted footprints in a yard on Park Street. Police followed the footprints and found a camouflage jacket that contained loose change and a black vinyl case with a Night Owl Optics Night Vision Spotting Scope at the rear of a home.

Bower was found nearby hiding near a fence and some bushes at the rear of Park Street. Bower cooperated and identified a majority of the vehicles that were robbed.

Police said a few victims of the thefts have been identified and contacted, but the majority were not.

The thefts are under investigation. The Kingston Township Police Department will seek an interview with Bower and Willis as part of their ongoing investigation.

Times Leader reporter Ron Lieback contributed to this article.

# Road

(continued from page 1)

nance,” mostly because no one lives along the stretch, he said.

John Cybulski of the Dallas Borough Road Department said widening work began last summer. Thirty to 40 trees were removed and two catch basins to stop runoff from entering the reservoir were installed. A 22-inch-thick gravel top is planned for installation this spring.

R.N. Fitch & Sons of Dallas was awarded the majority of the work. The Dallas Borough Road Department is assisting.

Because the road has gone virtually unused, there is illegal trash dumping in the area, said Moskovitz. “We’ve removed debris, carpeting and tires.” He hopes more traffic on the road will have the side benefit of curtailing that activity.

Walter Chamberlain of the

Luzerne County Conservation District said a number of similar projects completed in the Back Mountain in recent years have aimed at reducing runoff in the region’s streams and lakes.

Runoff not only pollutes the water with dirt and chemicals, it can have a “harmful effect on aquatic life,” said Josh Longmore, also with the Conservation District.

“Any project protecting water that feeds into the reservoir seems like a good project to me,” commented Chamberlain. The reservoir provides water to Wyoming Valley communities.

Although there have been similar projects in recent years, none has received as large a grant as the current Dallas Borough project.

Two other Back Mountain



POST PHOTO/ERIN YOUNGMAN

Dallas Borough has received a \$30,000 state grant to improve a previously unmaintained portion of Reservoir Road.

projects that received Dirt and Gravel Road Grants, totalling a combined \$7,850, have included Halowich Road, Harveys

Lake, completed in 2002, and a state-owned road off of Smith Pond Road in Jackson Township, also completed in 2002.

# Principal

(continued from page 1)

came a teacher, and wanted to come back to work where I went to school,” she said. “I really think it’s a tribute to them.”

Since graduating from Lake-Lehman, Halowich has worked at Bishop O’Reilly High School in Kingston and in the Pleasant Valley School District near East Stroudsburg. She always knew she wanted to be a teacher — except for a brief stint in ninth grade when she wanted to be a genetic engineer.

“I was the kind of kid that would come home and play school,” she said.

Although she loved teaching, Halowich said she quickly realized she wanted to be involved with more of the educational “big picture,” something she couldn’t do from the classroom. So she went back to East Stroudsburg University and completed a master’s degree in elementary education and an administrative certification.

For her, the beauty of the assistant principal position lies in the diversity of items she takes care of, from bus and cafeteria duty to class scheduling, parental contact and helping students with locker trouble. “One minute you could be doing something that has to do with discipline, and the next it could be something with how we’re going to run our schedule.”

“I love it. It’s very challenging.”

Halowich has taken on the new position at the same time

*“I was the kind of kid that would come home and play school.”*

**Tracey Halowich**  
Assistant Principal  
Lake-Lehman  
Junior/Senior High School

junior and senior high students are spending their first year in the combined Junior-Senior High building. A large-scale renovation and expansion project was mostly completed by the start of this school year. She feels her time last spring as acting assistant principal helped prepare her to meet the challenge of the transitional year.

“There’s always going to be something that comes up,” she said about the change. “You just have to learn to adjust. We’ve learned a lot over the last year.”

Some of the same teachers who taught at Lehman when she was a student are still there. Last year she handed out diplomas at commencement alongside co-principal Robert Roberts, who was in administration when she graduated.

“I don’t think people get this opportunity — to be able to come back and teach at the school you graduated from. I’m very proud to say that I taught at Lake-Lehman, I graduated from Lake-Lehman, and now I’m an administrator at Lake-Lehman.”

# Speed

(continued from page 1)

The letters will be sent to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission this week as part of an application requesting the limit. The proposed regulation would limit speeds to 45 mph during the day, on weekends and holidays between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

The Harveys Lake Lions Club has signed on, but most important, said Squitieri, is the letter of support he received Wednesday from borough council. The group voted unanimously at its January meeting to provide the letter.

“Borough council represents the largest number of constituents. They represent all of the borough,” said Squitieri.

Other organizations providing support include the Harveys Lake Women’s Club and the Harveys Lake Crime Watch group.

Acting Lions Club President Pete Austin said his group was unanimous in its decision to support the measure.

“It’s obvious something’s got to be done. It’s just an accident

waiting to happen.”

Austin said the combination of increased boat speeds, additional year-round residents and more visitors has created a hazardous situation.

Squitieri said he hasn’t had any negative reaction to the proposition, but has been questioned about how the understaffed Fish and Boat Commission will enforce the limit.

Squitieri responds that the issue for him isn’t as much about enforcement as it is about creating basic guidelines.

After the speed limit application is sent to Harrisburg, a process will begin that will involve watercraft traffic studies and public comment sessions.

According to the Fish and Boat Commission, the penalty for breaking a lake speed limit is similar to that assigned for speeding in a car, a \$50 fine plus court costs, in most cases.

The Harveys Lake Yacht Club, the only organization to not provide a letter of support, could not be reached for comment.

# SENIOR MENUS

Senior Citizens Centers sponsored by the Area Agency on Aging for Luzerne and Wyoming Counties offers hot noon meals Monday through Friday to people 60 years of age or older. Donations from participants are gratefully accepted and needed in order to expand this program. The following is the menu for the week of Feb. 9-13. All menus include margarine, milk and coffee. The Senior Center is located at 22 Rice St., Dallas.

MONDAY: Chile con carne with cheese, tossed salad, chilled pears.

TUESDAY: Egg omelet, sausage links, hash browns, broccoli, blueberry muffin.

WEDNESDAY: Stuffed shells with tomato sauce, Italian mixed vegetables, grapes.

THURSDAY: Roast beef au jus, noodles, hot fruit compote, carrots, sherbet.

FRIDAY: Stuffed chicken breast, stuffed baked potatoes, Roman vegetable medley, cherry pie.

# PROPERTY TRANSFERS

The following property transfers were recorded recently at the Luzerne County Courthouse:

Estate of Gerald M. Oppenheimer to Michelle Novak, 108 Orchard East, Dallas, \$109,000.

Douglas J. Higgins to Andrew Roan and spouse, Dallas Township, \$80,000.

William Oplinger and spouse tax claim to Charles J. Alaimo, Fern Ridge, Dallas Township, \$555.

William Miller and spouse to Joseph Stankus and spouse, Franklin Township, \$15,000.

Brian Lasher and spouse to Basil Barbacci and spouse, Franklin Township, \$30,000.

Thomas Ballaro to William Horner, Harveys Lake, \$36,000.

Hanover Homes North Corp. to Doug Poslock and spouse, Rolling Meadows, Jackson Township, \$235,165.

David Mariner and spouse to Robert K. Mericle and spouse, Jackson Township, \$852,000.

Wayne Gullett and spouse to

Arthur Wagner and spouse, 1210 Meadowcrest Drive, Jackson Township, \$210,000.

Percy Love and spouse to Christopher O’Brien, Midway Manor, Kingston Township, \$128,000.

Augustus Argentaiti Jr. to Craig Coburn and spouse, Kingston Township, \$76,000.

Maryann Voitek to Joseph Voitek and spouse, Kingston Township, \$140,000.

Judith E. Gomba to Richard Adamchick and spouse, Kingston Township, \$130,000.

Judith E. Gomba to Richard Adamchick and spouse, Kingston Township, \$10,000.

Judith E. Gomba to Richard Adamchick and spouse, Kingston Township, \$10,000.

Estate of Leila Morckel to Francis P. Parulis, Trucksville, Kingston Township, \$65,000.

Eric H. Wolfson to Michael Kizis and spouse, Lehman Township, \$738,500.

Edward Warkevitz and spouse to Frederick Sanfandre and spouse, Lehman Township, \$6,000.

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Coverage Area: The Post covers the “Back Mountain” area of Luzerne County, including Dallas, Kingston, Lehman and Jackson townships, Dallas Borough, Harveys Lake and the Dallas and Lake-Lehman school districts. We try to get to as many events as possible, but staff and space limitations make it impossible to cover everything. If you have news about your family, town or organization, please send it to us and we’ll try to get it in. Photographs are welcome.

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