



Mardi Gras fun and food

John Petroski (Uncle Sam) tried to rattle Tara Connors at the Gate of Heaven School Mardi Gras festivities last week.

At right, Emily Churchfield grabs a bite of crepe, one of the items on the menu.

FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK



Student says petition for MLK Day is stymied

By MARK GUYDISH
For The Post

DALLAS TWP. — Dallas High School senior Sydney Guelich doesn't necessarily want another day off from school, even though it sounds that way. She just wants equality for Martin Luther King Jr.

An assembly scheduled for Martin Luther King Jr. Day was canceled Jan. 19 with nothing replacing it. That spurred Guelich to circulate a petition, but the principal wouldn't allow it. Now she wants to make her case public.

"I think it's sad that they're just not taking me seriously," Guelich said. "I don't understand why we can celebrate other people's holidays, but when it comes to a black man, the Back Mountain won't honor it."

The petition didn't expressly ask for Martin Luther King Jr. Day off. It "is seeking to have things fair across the board. It's a national holiday. It should be treated like other national holidays."

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People agrees, according to Ron Felton, president of the Wilkes-Barre chapter.

Felton said that last year the

national organization adopted a resolution discouraging national, state and regional officers from talking at programs held by schools that give kids off on other holidays but not on Martin Luther King Day.

"They invite you there to speak so they can say they are doing something to observe it," Felton said, adding that he spoke at a Dallas assembly honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Day a few years ago. "When you think about it, it's really an insult."

But School District Superintendent Gilbert Griffiths said there is no discrimination against the holiday. He pointed out that children do not get Veterans Day off either — and added that he is a veteran.

"We feel we can provide programs here that would be more educational than students having the day off," Griffiths said. All of the School District's schools have some sort of events marking both days, he added.

Griffiths said this year's Martin Luther King event was canceled at the last minute. "The gentleman they had contracted to come and speak didn't even show up. Kids were in the seats waiting."



FOR THE POST/CLARK VAN ORDEN

Dallas High School senior Sydney Guelich, in her family's barn where they raise show horses, said the school won't let her circulate a petition asking the School District to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day the same way as other national holidays

And he said it is routine, and even necessary, to require principals to approve student petitions. "Some kids sign because of peer pressure. You have some petitions that have no merit."

Griffiths said that despite the School District's small black population, it stresses diversity through programs with area colleges, including exchanging Dallas students with minority

students in Wilkes-Barre Area for a day.

But Guelich says it's not enough. "People can say they are not prejudiced and don't raise their kids that way, but I walk the halls every day and I hear what the kids say, and you only learn that from your parents."

Pimm

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craft tumbling over. Fortunately, the worst injury was a broken leg.

The civilian population was welcoming, Pimm said, sometimes too much so. After insurgent attacks became more frequent, the Iraqis' desire to see American vehicles and personnel up close became unsettling. Still, "Most of the people were great," Pimm said. "They tried to learn a little English and to teach our soldiers about their culture."

Iraqi civilians were commonly around, either working as contractors or providing services, such as the "restaurants" they set up within the camp, serving local food and attempting to make American dishes.

Sometimes, when supplies didn't arrive on time, soldiers would go to the local town to buy what was wanted or needed. "One time we went on a Pepsi run," Pimm said. "It wasn't like going to Wal-mart," since a group of armored vehicles loaded with soldiers went along for security.

But it won't be the sand, the camp or the friendly Iraqis Pimm will remember most about his time overseas — it will be the encouragement he

got from people in the Back Mountain.

"I always knew there was a lot of support back here," he said Monday. But the depth of it surprised him.

Most unexpected were the letters and notes of support from people he didn't know, whether grade school students or elderly residents of nursing homes. "The people are genuinely interested in what we did and what it was like," he said.

From what he saw, Pimm feels the Iraqis want to take back control of their country, but realize they aren't ready to withstand attacks from Saddam loyalists and outside agitators.

Pimm saw the problem firsthand, when a squad of U.S. soldiers and Iraqi police raided a home where IEDs, improvised explosive devices, were being made. The leader of the insurgents was another Iraqi policeman.

Pimm is scheduled to return to Fort Campbell, Kentucky in about a week, where he will finish out his enlistment in July, 2005. Then he plans to return home, go to school and perhaps pursue political office.

Blaine

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nied American commanders as they met with town officials, who usually included a local sheik, or religious leader.

A chaplain's assistant in the famed 82nd Airborne, Blaine said he would drive all over western Iraq to stop by units where his help was needed. He would also visit a combat support hospital in Baghdad once a week.

Blaine re-enlisted for three more years, but will keep his feet on the ground in his next assignment, since his body no longer wants to tolerate air drops. Now at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, he is anticipating a transfer to a base in New Jersey.

The Lake-Lehman gradu-

ates, Eric in 1999 and Ricky in 2000, are both Eagle Scouts, one of many shared experiences. "They've been best friends since they were 6," Debbie Blaine, Ricky's mother, said, after meeting as cub scouts.

Debbie Blaine hopes both her son and Eric stay stateside until they leave the service. "Eric was gone too damn long," she said last week.

The Post welcomes news about all Back Mountain soldiers, particularly those serving in the Middle East. E-mail messages may be sent to us at thepost@leader.net. Please include as complete identification and contact information as possible.

IN THE SERVICE

Navy Hospitalman Nathan Carsman, son of Sheila and Joseph Carsman of Shavertown, recently graduated from the Basic Hospital Corps School at Naval Hospital Corps School, Great Lakes, Ill.

During the 14-week course, Carsman learned medical procedures used to provide first aid and assist Navy doctors and nurses. Carsman also received an introductory instruction for service in a variety of medical environments, from fleet hospitals and shipboard medical departments to fleet Marine forces and medical administration offices.

Carsman's first assignment after school will involve direct patient care, but with his training, Carsman can work in several areas, including first aid and assisting with minor surgery, pharmacy and laboratory analysis, patient transporta-

tion, and food service inspections.

Carsman is a 2003 graduate of Lake-Lehman High School and joined the Navy in June 2003.

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Marine Corps Reserve Pvt. Jason L. Shoemaker, son of Cathy L. Shoemaker of Edwardsville, Pa. and Rod L. Shoemaker of Trucksville, Pa., recently completed 12 weeks of basic training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S. C. designed to challenge new Marine recruits both physically and mentally. Shoemaker and fellow recruits ended the training phase with The Crucible, a 54-hour, team evolution culminating in an emotional ceremony in which recruits are presented the Marine Corps Emblem, and addressed as "Marines" for the first time in their careers.

Harveys Lake Lions invite new members

The Harveys Lake Lions Club is accepting applications for new members. Meetings are held twice monthly. Applications can be obtained by calling J. Peter Farrell at 639-1235 or Jeff Smith at 696-5026.

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