

OUR OPINION

Help chart a new course for old Lehman building

The turnout for a meeting Wednesday could have a great affect on the ultimate fate of the empty Lake-Lehman Middle Level building on Lehman-Outlet Road. Public support will bolster plans by Volunteers of America to convert the building into 26 units of affordable housing for the elderly. A lack of support might signal to funding groups that there is little need for such a facility. We hope the former is the case.

The Back Mountain is one of the "youngest" parts of north-eastern Pennsylvania, known more for modern schools and up-scale subdivisions than a senior citizen population. But that doesn't mean there are no older people here, or anyone who drives a Chevy rather than a Caddy. About one in five residents are age 60 or over, and many of them represent families that were here before the recent boom times. Some are finding it increasingly difficult to take care of their property or to afford their taxes. For them, a clean, bright apartment in a revitalized building could represent their best hope for remaining in the area they love.

The former school building has some drawbacks, including the lack of amenities nearby. Lehman center is not exactly Times Square, although this facility and the blooming regional recreation park may attract new businesses, or even modest public transportation. But chances are most of the people who would live in a revitalized building already are accustomed to being beyond walking distance of shops and restaurants.

Beyond the anticipated need this conversion would meet, it would be desirable to see a venerable structure used and improved, rather than blown up or torn down. The old school may not qualify for historic registration, but it stands as a reminder of previous generations and their commitment to the Back Mountain's vitality. It seems incredibly wasteful to let that slip away or be replaced by another bland box that offers no hint of what came before.

The meeting will take place Wednesday, April 7, at the Lake-Lehman Junior/Senior High School, beginning at 7 p.m. Anyone who has an interest in planning for the future is welcome to attend.

Homefront support is laudable

The Dallas Ladies Auxiliary of Legion Post 672 is a tireless bunch of volunteers who don't mind devoting their leisure time to supporting American men and women in uniform. They are so dedicated, in fact, that they have been recognized for collecting more personal supplies for shipment overseas than any other unit in the nation.

Recently, the Auxiliaries decided to fulfill a different need, sending good cheer and messages of support instead of shaving cream and soap. Their efforts took the form of oversized cards decorated with children's notes and artwork, signed by anyone who wanted to offer words of encouragement and appreciation.

We join in saluting the good work done by the Dallas Ladies Auxiliary, as well as the contributions of businesses, organizations, schools and individuals who put time, energy and treasure to work for the benefit of the troops. We're sure the men and women serving in the Middle East and around the world are even more grateful for their efforts.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

There are many ways to support the Back Mountain Memorial Library. Some require a commitment of time, others a donation of books or items that can be sold at the annual auction. Right now, thousands of families are being asked to do something even simpler — write a check. In an effort to offset a reduction in state aid, the Friends of the Back Mountain Memorial Library have expanded their annual mailing from about 3,000 addresses to 10,000. I hope the response comes in at an equivalent, or even larger, scale.

It is a testament to the library's devoted supporters that hours have not been cut back or other services noticeably reduced this year. Many other libraries, large and small, have been forced to take such steps in the face of lower revenues. While the Back Mountain library has thus far kept up a brave face, challenges still exist, and we all need to pitch in to meet them.

That we will do so is not in doubt. This community has a more than half-century track record of nurturing the library, starting with the initial \$10,000 seed money, raised in less than a week in February, 1945.

Since then, resourceful volunteers and conscientious staffers have helped the library grow from the first floor of a house on Main Street in Dallas to the present former school building on Huntsville Road, where more than 15,000 active borrowers check out over 110,000 items each year. The library also offers children's programs, a used book store, computers and a community room. And this is not even to mention the auction, which is an institution in itself.

Please respond to the mailed solicitation with a donation of any size you're comfortable with. If you'd like to help in other ways, call the library at 675-1182. They'll surely find a way to use your interest and talents in the ongoing effort to maintain and improve this important community resource.

Send your comments to *The Post* by e-mail

thepost@leader.net

Digital photos welcome, too!

THE POST

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A carpet of yellow daisies at Darling's Greenhouse in Dallas. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

Academic achievements deserve equality with sports

Editor,

In your Sunday, March 28, 2004 edition you have presented readers with an excellent large color pictorial of the state champion Bishop O'Reilly boys basketball team with a great tie-in to Gate Of Heaven School. Pictures and story appear on page one and page sev-

en in the sports section. Good job!

Interestingly, on page 10, you present one black and white 7 1/2" x 5 3/4" picture of Bishop O'Reilly students who excelled at a recent regional competition promoted by the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science. This competition focused on science and

mathematics subjects. Each student in the picture placed first or second in special competitions. What a fantastic achievement by a large group of 18 students from one school. Congratulations to the students, the faculty and the parents. It seems to me that this academic news is front page material. Why is it relegated to

page 10?

By the way, I think you missed an outstanding opportunity to point out (and develop another interesting story) that Conor Judge appeared not only in the science/math article, but also in the basketball story.

Russell Smith
Jackson Township

GUEST COLUMN

Referendum: Good governance or bad?

Local government systems were established in Pennsylvania more than 250 years ago, based on the belief that officials elected at the local level best are able to determine local needs. Public school boards, established by the Pennsylvania General Assembly to oversee the operation of the state's school districts, are no exception to this rule.

However, if some people have their way, school board decisions would have to undergo further scrutiny before they could be implemented. Proposals under consideration in the Legislature will require school boards to go before the voters for approval of certain tax increases. The timing of such proposals, coming on the heels of state and federal efforts that focus on student achievement levels, is filled with irony.

As it now stands, school board members are elected to oversee the operations and management of local school districts. Members of the school board are charged with

making the best possible decisions regarding the use of the available funds. They also are charged with ensuring that students receive the best possible education, and that all students are provided with the tools to make that happen. With the increased attention being paid to test scores and the focus concentrated on staying off certain lists of "failing" schools, school board members increasingly are accountable for the performance of their students, a responsibility they accept.

Increasing academic performance in a school district is not an easy task. The answer seldom is the same from district to district, and reaching a solution requires the board's best thinking. Great patience is needed, because the gap between implementation and improvement can be several years. Most importantly, these efforts cost money.

Even then, there are no guarantees of success and many times programs must be adjusted to attain the desired results.

But one thing is certain: School boards need to make intelligent, informed decisions to help children achieve. Boards, in turn are accountable for their decisions, and those decisions effect both students and taxpayers.

The proposed referendum removes accountability from school boards for making the best decisions possible on matters that affect student achievement. Should a board decide to propose new spending to implement new state regulations or the provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, only to see it defeated at the ballot box, who would stand accountable before parents, community leaders and others for failure to comply with the requirements of federal and state law?

Furthermore, Pennsylvania's school districts are beset by myriad unfunded mandates from the state level that require the expenditure of millions of dollars. The requirements for such spending will not diminish with the implementation of

referendum. This spending cannot be cut or scaled back, nor can spending on required curricular offerings. A history of failed referendum questions therefore would lead to a district offering the minimum requirements to students, along with optional programs and classes. Student activities and other noncurricular programs, such as before and after-school programs, could be cut.

School board members are elected to make decisions and stand accountable for them every four years. They were elected based on what voters thought they could bring to the position and on the belief that they will do the right thing. These are some of the principles on which our state and its system of local government were founded. Referendum changes all of that. But ask yourself, will the change be for the better? We think not.

This opinion was provided by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

70 Years Ago
April 6, 1934

NOXEN TO WILKES-BARRE RIDE TO TAKE 7 HOURS

The trip from Noxen to Wilkes-Barre, which can be easily made in an hour by car, will consume seven and three-quarter hours on the new combination passenger and freight train service started on the Bowman's Creek Branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad.



ONLY YESTERDAY

The anniversary of the founding of the Greater Dallas Rotary Club seven years ago will be celebrated at an April 12 dinner-dance.

60 Years Ago
April 7, 1944

KUNKLE MAN ON TROOP SHIP SUNK BY ENEMY

Pfc. Clifford Nulton, a Dal-

las Township boy, was probably one of those who gave their lives when an American transport was sunk in European waters with heavy loss of life.

Warren F. Hicks, former Dallas Post editor and now a fighter pilot, has been awarded the Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross.

Items that could be purchased at Fairlawn Stores in Kunkle, Dallas and Trucksville: Ivory soap, 6¢; gravy mix, 9¢; Crisco, 3 lb. container, 69¢.

50 Years Ago
April 2, 1954

390 FOOT WELL READY

Dallas-Shavertown Water Company's new 390 foot well on Ferguson Avenue is waiting only for an official state permit to start supplying water to Druid Hills and portions of Shavertown.

A 300,000 gallon water storage standpipe is being erected at Natona Mills by the Graver Tank and Manufacturing Com-

pany.

Franklin Township constable Byron Kester warned dog owners, Friday, that if any dogs are found running sheep and catching chickens they will be shot on site.

40 Years Ago
April 2, 1964

STARFIRES CUT RECORD

Back Mountain rock band the Starfires made their first 45 recording at a major New York studio last week.

David Cochran, 34, a resident of Lehman Township, is in fair condition at Nesbitt Hospital after suffering severe face injuries following a dynamite cap explosion at a mine stripping operation in Plymouth.

30 Years Ago
April 4, 1974

12" OF WET SNOW PARALYZES AREA

The weather bureau reported the area received more than

12 inches of snow last weekend that knocked out power and telephone lines throughout the area.

Trucksville residents could soon pay more for their water service. The average residential customer could see their annual cost rise from \$79 to \$126.

20 Years Ago
April 4, 1984

SPRING STORM BRINGS DAMAGE

The awning at the Treat Drive-In Restaurant on Route 309 suffered extensive damage as a result of more than a foot of snow received a week after the first day of spring.

Gerald Schultz, Dallas, is a candidate for the position of delegate to the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco.

Only Yesterday
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back-issue files
of *The Post*.

Q: Where do you find the most Back Mountain news each week? A: Only in *The Post*