

Getting up close in Huntsville. Page 3



THE POST

50¢

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF THE DALLAS & LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

'Amazing Grace' at 101



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Noelle Straka and Kevin Straka Jr. helped their great-grandma, Grace Webster, celebrate her 101st birthday.

She's sweet and sound and still gets around

By CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK
Post Correspondent

IDENTOWN — She's a celebration of life, a study in independence, humor and wit, and what's kept Grace Hemmitt Webster in such good shape these 101 years is her boundless activity and help from her family and community. And she's still pretty good at Scrabble. "See I'm beating her now," Grace says with a sly laugh about a match against her daughter that has been interrupted by a reporter. The score is 78-17 in her favor. She also likes to play canasta, Tri-Ominos and other games. But her daughter, Carolyn Straka, did not think her mother would pull through the day in 1996, when a call came in from the Florida hospital

where her mother had checked in. "She had a tumor in her abdomen the size of a bread loaf," says Straka. Doctors were hesitant to operate on the then-93-year-old woman. But Grace was determined not leave the hospital without the operation. She said, "I came in here with this thing and I'm not leaving with it still in me." The operation was a success. "But the doctor's eyes were like saucers when he saw the size of the benign tumor that was removed," recalls Straka. Straka and her husband, Ed, decided then to bring Grace back to Pennsylvania. "I tried to arrange her living in a residential home but nobody ever got back to me about it. I called many times," she says. So they literally "raised the

roof" on their one-story ranch house to make it bigger and more accommodating. They moved their bedroom upstairs, made the downstairs bathroom handicap friendly and opened up the kitchen. They broke through the back wall of the house and added a large family room with as many big windows as possible, because Grace wanted to look outside and see them working in the garden. "She would have withered away in a home and been depressed," thinks Straka. The Strakas, both now retired, Carolyn from C-TEC and Ed from the state prison, don't mind caring for her mother. "She's easy to take care of, but don't get me started, we haven't had a vaca-

See GRACE, pg 3

Demand strains local food bank

The Back Mountain Food Pantry is serving 150 households this year, up from usual 125.

By M.B. GILLIGAN
Post Correspondent

The Back Mountain Food Pantry has issued a request for donations to help cover the needs of area families. "We're down quite a bit and we just purchased \$500 worth of food from the Weinberg Food Bank to help out," said Louise Hazeltine, a long-time volunteer at the food pantry. "We have two big drives, the Scouts and the Scouts and the postal workers, that usually carry us through the summer. This year, though, we have more clients than usual." The Back Mountain Food Pantry is currently helping over 150 households, up from the usual 125. Each household is eligible to request donations every other month. "I just spoke to an elderly woman who told me how much this helps," said Carol Eyet, a volunteer who coordinates weekly food distributions. "When they tell me their stories, it's almost hard to believe what they live on."

The food pantry is sponsored by the Back Mountain Ministerium and each of the member churches is issuing an appeal for donations from their congregations. The pantry is located in the lower level of the new wing at the Trucksville United Methodist Church Education Building, with local residents and members of all the churches forming the volunteer crew. "We use volunteers to sort and shelve donations and put together orders, but there are also clerical jobs that need to be done," said Hazeltine, who is always on the lookout for more help. You can call her at 696-1332 to sign up. The food pantry is in short supply of the

See FOOD, pg 2

Still rockin' after all these years

By RONALD BARTIZEK
Post Staff

Fans of rock 'n' roll music's golden era are in for a treat when Joe Nardone and the All Stars take the stage next Saturday at the Irem Temple Country Club Pavilion. The band, one of the region's most popular in the 1960s, stopped playing regularly in 1972. Joe Nardone, who now operates a chain of 11 Gallery of Sound stores, led the first reunion concert was held in 1992, after fans had asked for the group to get together one more time. "We didn't think it would go on for 12 years," said Nardone, who lives in Shavertown. The concerts started at Genetti's in Wilkes-Barre, but quickly outgrew the space. This will be the seventh year at Irem, which Nardone said adds to the atmosphere. About 1,000 people usually attend. Nardone says the Irem venue fits with his band's history. "It almost has the same feeling" as Sans Souci Park, the local musical hotbed of the rock 'n' roll era where the All Stars often played three nights a week, when admission was a handsome 50¢.

See NARDONE, pg 2



POST PHOTO/RON BARTIZEK

Joe Nardone posed at his office with a photo of the All Stars band on stage 40 years ago.

This teen gives her generation a good name

By CAMILLE FIOTI
Post Correspondent

SHAVERTOWN — Debra Ketchner, of Shavertown isn't your average 15-year-old teenage girl. As evidence, consider that on August 8, the Dallas High School sophomore received the Scholarship Record Award at the Miss Teen Pennsylvania Pageant at Bloomsburg University. The focus of the pageant is to "accent positive qualities of today's young women of character" as stated on the program. It is not a beauty pageant, Debra's mom Jane stressed. Open to girls age 13-19, candidates must be invited to apply. Jane Ketchner said that "scouts" comb the country looking for girls with exemplary academic and community service backgrounds. Debra received her invitation at school late last year. "I couldn't believe it!" Debra said. "At first I didn't even know what it was." After she received the invitation, she applied, then had to wait to see if she was accepted. After being accepted, she had to send in her transcripts from school and a list of her extra-curricular activities. Another requirement was to collect a total of \$450 in donations from local business sponsors. Her sister Mary, 13, even helped out by donating \$50 of her own money earned from

See TEEN, pg 3

Inside The Post



Back Mountain 11-year-old girls go on winning spree

Page 7

Luzerne County Fair Queen and Princess hopefuls can register.

Page 6

10 Pages, 1 Section

Calendar10
Church9
Crossword8
Editorials4
Obituaries5
School8
Sports7-8

How To Reach Us

News: 675-5211
thepost@leader.net
15 N. Main St.
Wilkes-Barre PA 18711
Advertising: 970-7102
Subscriptions and Delivery: 829-5000

DALLAS HARVEST FESTIVAL

Five are vying for the 'honor' of kissing the pig

The Dallas Harvest Festival Committee of the Dallas Community Visioning program announces the return of the "Kiss the Pig" Contest to the second annual Dallas Harvest Festival, on Sunday, September 19. Five new Back Mountain personalities will vie for the honor of "kissing" a one-year-old potbelly pig named "Rocco Rooter." Being conducted as a

local fundraiser, the Dallas Harvest Festival committee will award contest proceeds to the non-profit organization of the winner's choice. The winner will be chosen by ballot, which should be accompanied by a \$1 donation. This year's contestants, and their charities, are: Dallas Borough Officer-in-Charge James Martin (Back Moun-

tain Police Association); Dallas Township Police Chief Robert Jolley (Ronald McDonald House); WBRE-TV, Ch. 28 Weathercaster Vince Sweeney (Shavertown Volunteer Fire Company); Kingston Township Police Chief James Balavage (Kingston Township Lions Club); Lehman Town-

See FESTIVAL, pg 2