

DEROJAS

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"not something I was raised with," but DeRojas says, "she has inspired my work." She now works as a coordinator for the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International, where she organizes fundraisers and conferences on social justice.

The second passion in DeRojas' young life is singing and music. Originally trained by John Vaida in the classical singing style, she minored in music at Susquehanna University. Before college, she attended Gate of Heaven School in Dallas and graduated from Bishop O'Reilly High School in 1998.

"She is technically and spiritually sound, and has developed her gift," says Beth Aciukewicz, who has watched DeRojas grow as a fellow cantor and parishioner at St. Therese's. Now DeRojas has produced a compact disc of classical and contemporary Catholic music to benefit Caritas Cuba, a social service agency run by the Catholic Church in Cuba.

Stymied by Castro's government, the agency has struggled to operate since it originated in 1992. Although educated by the Catholic Jesuits at a private school in Cardenas, Cuba, "He (Castro) has a problem with the Church," says DeRojas. Coincidentally, Castro attended the same Jesuit high school with her grandfather, a retired surgeon who lives in Mountain Top.

The end of support from the communist block countries for

"She is technically and spiritually sound, and has developed her gift."

Beth Aciukewicz
St. Therese's parishioner

Cuba has opened the island's eyes to other sources of support, such as when Caritas helped convince Cuba to accept American aid after Hurricane Lili.

For now DeRojas is happy just to be involved with her three passions in life: her music, her faith, and Cuba. She hopes the sale of her CD will make a significant contribution to Caritas.

She also helps edit a book about Cuba's future, a compilation of essays called "Looking Forward" written by top Cuban scholars, and wonders what will be in store for Cuba now that foreign tourism has overtaken sugar production as the leading industry.

Richard Orlowski, of Dallas, also a parishioner at St. Therese's, is not surprised by DeRojas' path. "I remember the first time I heard her sing, there was something special about her and her voice," he said after buying one of her CDs.

DeRojas will be selling discs and cantoring at St. Therese's Church, Shavertown, through January 2. The discs are available online through the Catholic Music Network or you can call 675-7030.

Gate of Heaven Christmas play

Preschool, kindergarten and first grade students at Gate of Heaven School put on their annual Christmas play last weekend to an audience of appreciative parents and friends. During the event members of each grade level put on a skit, with musical accompaniment by Suzanne Motyka, who also led the Gate Singers in performance.

PHOTOS FOR THE POST BY CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK



Clockwise from top: Mary Kozick coaches the preschool production at Gate of Heaven's annual Christmas program. Cade Corcoran was at the microphone as Stephen Postupak paid rapt attention. Kneeling were Jacob Dragon and Kara MacIntyre. Standing were Tony Caravaggio, Morgan Luksic and Olivia Dymond; First grader Jimmy Reilly tests the light on Rudolph's (Tyler Manzoni) nose; Abby Spencer was Mary and Cameron Shaver played Joseph.



FOR THE POST/M.B. GILLIGAN

Lehman-Jackson students from left, Courtney Sult, Jessica Wright, Katie Wojcik, Linley Smolow, Stevie Kioske, Dorothy Wolfe and Melissa Wright, helped with the SPCA food drive.

IDITAROD

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of the morning collections. Sixth grade teachers Donna Richards, January Cook, and Mike Adamshick used the event to cover a number of teaching standards. "Every day we calculated the weight of the items collected and charted it out on bar graphs," said Richards. "We're definitely using cross curricular standards, too."

In addition, the students will be meeting standards in reading, language arts, social studies, and geography, as they con-

tinue their study of Alaska and the Iditarod, which is called the "Last Great Race on Earth."

"The students have written letters to students in Golovin, Alaska, which has a population of 148," said Holdredge. "We're also going to have our own version of the race in our playground in March." They will be using an authentic dog sled that belongs to Holdredge. He brought in dog booties and harnesses from the items he has collected over the years to show to the students.

SPCA

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much to their owners so they use the chips to make sure there are no mixups."

Maffei also told the students that a large number of animals are available for adoption from shelters outside of Wilkes-Barre if someone is looking for a particular breed. The website petfinder.com can be used to see what is available at nearby shelters.

"We (SPCA) depend on donations from our community to exist and without that help we wouldn't be able to help the 2,000 animals that come into the shelter every year," Maffei told the sixth graders. "We do get donations of food for dogs and cats but we don't always get enough cat litter or the bleach that we use for cleaning cages. We always need blankets, too."

Volunteer help is always needed and the SPCA encourages high school students to work with the agency for completion projects. A variety of educational programs are offered, including shelter tours, animal behavior programs and

a special two-week long, summer training program. For more information, call Beth Maffei at 825-4111.

Work starts on entrance at proposed development

By DAVE JANOSKI
For The Post

DALLAS TWP. — Work has begun on an entrance road for a possible "big box" store near the intersection of Routes 415 and 118, but the developer would provide few other details on the project Friday.

Developer J. Naparło said he couldn't offer a timetable for construction of a building on the 48-acre site or discuss who the possible occupant might be.

In 2003, Naparło presented the township planning commission with plans for a 155,530-square-foot "big box" location he said could be used by any large retail business such as a Wal-Mart, Target, Kmart, or Kohl's.

But since then, Naparło has declined to get more specific about his plans for the former farmland.

"I don't have anything planned for it," he said Dec. 17.

To acquire a state highway permit for the "big box" site, Naparło was required to purchase another property on Route 415 — about two miles south at Dallas Corners in Dallas Borough.

A closed service station on the Dallas Corners property

would be demolished to make way for an intersection improvement, possibly a traffic circle, aimed at easing traffic congestion that could be worsened by Naparło's project.

In its latest 12-year transportation program, the state transportation commission included \$400,000 for preliminary engineering for the Dallas Corners project. That

engineering is scheduled to take place between now and September 2008 at the latest, according to a list of projects released by the commission.

Construction of a traffic circle or other improvements won't begin for at least three years, according to Mike Cotter, a spokesman for the state Department of Transportation.

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