

## COG holding Sept. 15 meeting

The Back Mountain Council of Governments will hold a public information meeting at 7 p.m. Sept. 15 at the Kingston Township Municipal Building, 180 East Center Street in Shavertown. The meeting will discuss the multi-municipal open space greenways outdoor recreation master plan for Dallas, Dallas Township, Kingston Township and Lehman Township.

The plan is being funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources with assistance from Luzerne County and the participating BMACOG municipalities. The planning is being directed by the Back Mountain Council of Governments, which has hired Cahill Associates, Inc. of West Chester to perform the necessary

technical work. All meeting attendees will automatically become members of the OS-GORMP advisory committee.

The purpose of the meeting is to explain the goals and objectives of the open space and recreation plan in more detail. Draft goals and objectives will be presented and discussed. Some of the topics to be discussed include the need for more open space in Back Mountain communities; the establishment of greenways to link existing or potential open space, recreation, and cultural facilities; the adequacy of outdoor recreational facilities; the possible expansion of ecotourism and other economic benefits; and other recreation and open space issues.

## Deadline nears for Kiss the Pig

The Dallas Harvest Festival Committee will hold its third annual "Kiss the Pig" contest in conjunction with the Dallas Harvest Festival. The annual street fair on Main Street in Dallas will be held Sunday, Sept. 18.

A donation of \$1.00 must be included with each submitted ballot. Voters may purchase as many ballots as they wish through Saturday, Sept. 17. Additional ballots will be available throughout the festival.

Four Back Mountain professionals have chosen to vie for the enviable honor, with all proceeds being donated for good cause. This year, the event proceeds will be donated to Dallas Fire & Ambulance Co.

The contestants are state Senator Charles D. Lemmond, Dallas postmaster Kristen Tucker, Dallas businessman Drew Fitch of R.N. Fitch & Sons, and Dallas School District superintendent Frank Galicki.

Ballot jars are located at the following locations: Ochman's Coin & Jewelry, Church Street, Dallas; J&J Deli, Route 415, Dallas; Citizen's Bank, Main Street, Dallas; Unimart, Route 309, Dallas; Pizza Perfect, Carverton Road, Trucksville; Lemmond's office in the Dallas Shopping Center.

Ballots may also be obtained at Hilbert's The Tractor Store, Route 415, Dallas; Fino's Pharmacy, Dallas; Dallas Fire & Ambulance Co. station, Church Street; and the Dallas High School, Conyngham Avenue.

The identity of the winning "kisser" is scheduled to be announced at the Harvest Festival.

The person with the most ballots will kiss "Rocco Rooter," a 2-year-old potbelly pig owned by 4-H educator Marge Bart of Dallas.

Last year's "kisser" was Kingston Township Police Chief James Balavage.

## Rev. Gommer to receive Buckingham Award

The Rev. Charles (Chuck) F. Gommer Jr. of Dallas, will receive the Harold C. Buckingham Award for Outstanding Service on Sept. 16 at Wyoming Seminary. Gommer is a former conference executive for the Wyoming Conference of the United Methodist Church and a retired United Methodist pastor.



Gommer

The award, established and bestowed by the trustees of Wyoming Seminary College Preparatory School, recognizes

exemplary service by a member of the school's Board of Trustees. It is named in honor of Harold C. Buckingham, eighth president of Wyoming Seminary, who also served as a trustee for 36 years.

Gommer, a member of the Board of Trustees for 30 years, serves as the board's vice chair-

man. He has provided service as a member of the board's executive committee, nominating committee and honors and awards committee.

"Thoughtfulness, human understanding and compassion, and a life of experience in group service within and beyond the Methodist Church make Chuck Gommer an incredibly valuable member of any group considering policies and making decisions that affect other people," said H. Jere-

my Packard, Wyoming Seminary president.

Gommer has served as pastor at United Methodist churches in Huntsville/Evans Falls, Avoca/Moosic, Trucksville, Kingston, the Church of Christ Uniting, and Endwell. He served as the superintendent of the Wilkes-Barre District of the Wyoming Conference and as the conference's council director before being named conference executive. He retired in 1998.

## TREES

Continued from Page 1

Rick Koval, naturalist at the North Branch Land Trust, has seen his share of ancient trees for a long time, too. He has nominated more than 70 trees in Northeastern Pennsylvania for the state's "Big Tree" program, but had never come across the tree in Trucksville until last week.

As Koval measured the stately white oak, he shook his head in disbelief.

"The crown is amazing," he said. "I've never measured a crown this wide." The tree's crown measures 144 feet in one direction and 125 feet in the other. It stands 65 feet tall and is almost 16 feet around. The tree is well over 200 years old, Koval estimates.

State forester Brad Ellison, headquartered in Scranton, says almost any tree could reach great or giant proportions given the right conditions and time. He and other foresters will come

out to measure a tree if the property owner thinks it may be an exceptionally large one.

While the measurement of large trees is done by the state foresters, the final record of championship size trees is kept by a non-profit group, the PA Forestry Association. The state, in conjunction with the national Champion Tree Project, has formalized the process to protect, propagate and preserve historic trees.

The Big Tree Program only measures, categorizes by county, and notes the "champion" trees. Ellison also cautions that designating such a tree does not necessarily protect it, but the designation may have some weight at the local levels of zoning enforcement.

Ruth Holthaus of Dallas thinks she may have some historic and large trees on her Norton Avenue property. An apple tree in her front yard is more than 40 feet tall and measures more than seven feet around.

"It only produces a few large apples each year, but they are so delicious and I make pies from

### DO YOU HAVE A BIG TREE?

Do you think you have a champion tree on your property? If so, send an e-mail to editor Dave Konopki at [dkonopki@leader.net](mailto:dkonopki@leader.net) or call him at 675-5211.

them."

Her turn-of-the-century house stands on what used to be the Norton farm in Dallas and was noted for its apple orchards. Recently the Holthaus had to, unwillingly, take down a shagbark maple that was 17 feet in diameter and threatening their garage.

"I love trees and would never take a tree down," she said.

Judy and David Rimple of Dallas also think they have what could be a historic landmark tree on their family property on Hildebrandt Road. The house was built in 1864 by Solomon Frantz, David Rimple's ancestor, and the tree is pictured on the property as the buildings were being constructed.

"A cousin told me he thought the tree might be a Penns Wood tree," he said. "It would be inter-

esting to find out."

Some people have notable trees on their property in the Back Mountain and don't even know it.

"I've been here 13 years and never knew it," said Omar Hallson, owner of the Castle Inn when told that the large blue spruce in the picnic area next to his restaurant is a Luzerne County co-champion.

Anyone who thinks they have a big or historic tree on their property should take rough measurements of the circumference at 4½ feet high, note the species, and call the forester, says Koval.

The state - through the Department of Conservation and Resources - can also direct you to state parks and preserves in the areas where stands of "old virgin forests" still exist and can be seen.

The PA Forestry Association has current lists and dimensions for champion trees. The phone number is 717-766-5371. Koval may also be reached at the North Branch Land Trust office in Trucksville by calling is 696-1691.

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