

THE POST

50¢

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

Dog trainer's passion taking her overseas

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor

KINGSTON TWP. — Nikki Banfield has a passion. A passion to teach. A passion to train. A passion to love.

A passion for animals.

The Trucksville woman's passion will take her out of the country for most of the next four years as she attends the Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine on the Island of St. Kitt's in the Caribbean. The longtime dog trainer left for the school earlier this week.

"I've always had the passion," said Banfield, as she packed her bags. "I think it started in the womb. I'm sure I'll be able to make a nice living after I graduate. But it has nothing to do with money. Some people are motivated by it and

there's nothing wrong with it. I'm just passionate about animals."

Banfield certainly hasn't taken the traditional road to veterinary school.

She will be 52 years old when she completes her studies — almost 55 if she wants to work in the field of animal behavior. The 48-year-old single woman — she says her children are her four German shepherds Terisla, Hertha, Kamots and Bitsy — has been training German shepherds for decades and has worked as the naturalist at Moon Lake County Park in Plymouth Township.

"Veterinary school is going to be a lot of hard work and studying," said Banfield, who earned an undergraduate degree in biology and master's degree in

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FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Veterinary school student Nikki Banfield poses with her four "children" — Terisla, Hertha, Kamots and Bitsy.

Contracts expire at Dallas, L-L

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor

All of the back-to-school shopping has been completed. The buses are gassed up and ready to go. And the classrooms are squeaky clean.

The Dallas and Lake-Lehman school districts are ready to begin the 2006-07 school year. But they'll do so without a new teachers contract.

The current contracts for both districts end Aug. 31. The respective contract negotiations began in February, but it doesn't appear as though new contracts are going to be approved in the near future. At Dallas, a state mediator has gotten involved in the negotiations.

But that doesn't mean optimism is running high.

"No, not at all," said Dallas school board member Maureen Matiska, when asked if she was optimistic a new contract could be worked out soon. "We've been meeting since February and we haven't made progress. I'm hoping that before the end of this school year, we'll have a contract. I'd like to see one before the end of the (calendar) year, but I'm not sure if that will be done."

Attempts by The Post to contact teachers union representatives at both school districts were not successful.

At Dallas, the three biggest contract issues are health care premiums, salary increases and early retirement incentives, said Matiska. The teachers currently do not pay any part of their health care premiums. The costs of the most popular plans are \$17,841 for an HMO family plan and \$16,994 for a traditional plan, according to business manager Grant Palfev.

"Right now, (the teachers) pay nothing," said Matiska, one of four school board directors who are members of a negotiating committee.

That's also the situation at Lake-Lehman, said school board member Mark Kornoski.

"They have the Rolls Royce of health care plans," he said. "They don't want to hear anything about a co-pay. In other jobs, I don't know anyone that doesn't contribute to their health care. Let's just say if my health care was costing \$18,000 a year, I'd be thrilled if I only had to pay \$2,000 a year."

Kornoski says he's been a little frustrated by the status of the talks.

"We're at a stalemate right now," he said. "The school board committee is willing to sit down and meet at anytime. We haven't gotten one tangible offer and we've met three or four times since February."

The school board member is also concerned about the rising salary increases.

"They're asking for seven-year contract and at the end, some teachers will be making more than \$100,000," he said. "That's not going to fly with the taxpayers. We don't have the tax base they have in larger school districts."

But despite the frustration and concerns, Kornoski believes a fair contract can be negotiated.

"I'm optimistic," he said. "We have a bunch of great teachers. I think we can sit down and hammer out a contract that can benefit both sides."

And that's the goal at Dallas, as well, says Matiska.

"Obviously, I want to see a contract that's acceptable to both sides," she said. "We have some longstanding faculty members who are very happy in the district. One of my roles has been to listen to them and come to some kind of agreement. I still think that's possible."

Fine swine & good spirits

By GENELLE HOBAN
Post Correspondent

KINGSTON TWP. — It might have been the main course, but pork was just one of the countless varieties of nosh available during the 13th annual pig roast at the Back Mountain Harvest Assembly Church in Trucksville.

"We had 300 trays of food donated by members of the church," said Paul Sanholtz, co-chairman of the event. "We had macaroni salad, pasta salad and every kind of dessert you could think of."

The event had so much food left over they planned to donate it to a shelter, according to Sanholtz who hoped the intention was carried out.

Approximately 800 people attended the event on the church grounds on Carverton Road. There was no admission charge.

"It's our gift back to the community," Sanholtz said.

The event began when the Rev. Dan Miller first came to the church. During his first year as pastor he said there were only about 30 members in the church.

"It was my idea, I just thought we needed to reach out to the community and we did, and now we have about 600 people attending services on a Sunday morning," he said.

Miller also said the purpose of the event is

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Charlie Makarewicz bites into an ear of roasted corn at the community-wide pig roast.

PHOTOS FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK



Jerry Brown roasts the corn at the Back Mountain Harvest Assembly pig roast.



John Elenchik watches over the cooking of the pork.



Aw shucks, getting the corn ready is no sweat for Glenn Miller.



Billy Robbins looks for approval before he has dessert.

"It's kind of like a funeral for summer, where the community comes together."

The Rev. Dan Miller

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