

# The DALLAS POST

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## Participants address grief, one tear at a time



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Claire Mark Gantz, herself a widow, comforts Debbie James during a grief support group at the Center Moreland Methodist Church.

## 'Grief Relief' offered here

By DOTTY MARTIN  
Editor

**Editor's note:** The names of some of the participants of this story have not been used at their request.

Claire Mark Gantz remembers feeling left out when her friends talked about going to a funeral. She didn't even know what a funeral was. She was 10 years old at the time.

Today, Gantz knows all too well what a funeral is. Now 80 years old, she has buried three husbands, an unborn child, her parents who died within 16 days of each other, a sister, two brothers, a very dear friend and her entire Sunday School class.

Gantz is a member of Grief Relief, a support group for anyone coping with the death of a loved one.

### GRIEF RELIEF

A support group for anyone coping with the death of a loved one that strives to offer compassion, encouragement and support to one another. Meets at 9 a.m. the first Saturday of every month at the Center Moreland United Methodist Church, Creamery Road. For further information, call 333-4354.

Gantz feels she is "a little more past where most people are" in dealing with her grief and attends the group's meetings to help the others.

Sue, whose husband "dropped dead in my kitchen" six years ago, comes for the same reason - and, she admits, because James, her very good friend, has told her that her presence at the group is a great comfort.

"I thought I'm a veteran," Sue said. "So I was going to give my sage advice because I know pain and you're never over it. But there was a lot of crying at the first session and I wasn't sure I wanted to come back."

James, a certified lay speaker who doesn't pretend

See GRIEF, Page 7



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Live animals play a big part in the production of "The Gift" at the Back Mountain Harvest Assembly on Carverton Road in Trucksville.

## Show is a real 'gift'

### Animals play very important role in annual production

By REBECCA BRIA  
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Animals played a critical role in the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. Mary and Joseph presumably rode camels or donkeys as they made their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for the census. The time came for Mary to give birth and, since there was no room at the inn, she was forced to deliver in a wooden manger among animals and bales of hay.

The story of the birth of Jesus is re-enacted every December at Back Mountain Harvest Assembly in Trucksville in an interesting, realistic way: with actual people and animals.

Five performances of this year's 14th annual free live nativity production of "The Gift" will be held at the church from December 14 through December 16. The performance attracted 13,000 people last year.

For years, animals in "The Gift" belonged to church members and their friends. But because they were farm animals, they were easily scared by noises

"We've had some interesting things. Last year somebody opened the gate to let somebody in and they all ran out, all the little goats."

LuAnn Letoski  
Director of "The Gift"

### IF YOU GO:

"The Gift" at Back Mountain Harvest Assembly  
340 Carverton Road, Trucksville  
Friday, Dec. 14: 6 and 8 p.m.  
Saturday, Dec. 15: 6 and 8 p.m.  
Sunday, Dec. 16: 6 p.m.

and crowds of people. Several years ago, Deacon Bill Lazar (who is now in Florida) saw camels at an event in Lancaster. Lazar inquired about renting the animals for "The Gift." For the fourth year now, animals will be brought to the church from Zoo Shows Company out of Massachusetts.

Zoo Shows Company brings two camels, a zebu, two or three sheep, a miniature donkey and about 10 goats. Horses are provided by Harteise Horse Farm in Dallas. Although the animals are tame, their actions are unpredictable.

"We've had some interesting things," said LuAnn Letoski, director of "The Gift." "Last year somebody opened the gate to let somebody in and they all ran out, all the little goats. One of the cows years ago was really in love with Joseph. And every time (Jo-

seph) would go to sing, she would make these lovey eyes at him."

Letoski, of Kingston, is a member of the church and a music teacher at State Street Elementary School. She first took part in "The Gift" in 1999. Letoski co-directed the production in 2000, became director in 2001 and has been director ever since.

There are other stories to tell about the animals, particularly the goats, says Letoski. A goat once ran down Carverton Road and another tried to devour a camera. Once, a goat even tried to eat the doll used as baby Jesus. Luckily, cast members were able to get it to stop.

Having animals around requires some special accommodations. Gravel needs to be laid down for the camels because they have very soft, sensitive padding on the bottoms of their feet and

will not step on anything if it feels sharp. The donkeys do not always want to move during the show and will sometimes heehaw their displeasure. Guido the camel is also known to be temperamental. Joseph keeps carrots in his pockets to help them behave.

At night, the animals from Zoo Shows Company stay inside the semi-trailer in which they travel. The trailer is plugged into a power source at the recreation center to make heat available. The horses from Harteise Horse Farm go home to sleep.

The price tag to have live animals is not cheap. Letoski says the cost is around \$5,000.

"It's worth it because they're really beautiful," she said.

Though she did not say how much money it costs to put on the entire production, Letoski says it

See GIFT, Page 3

### Inside The Post



Flag football, Page 10

### 18 Pages, 1 Section

Church .....6  
Community .....2, 3, 5, 6  
Obituaries .....5  
School .....2, 7, 8, 9  
Sports .....10, 11

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## There are new places to eat in the Back Mountain

By REBECCA BRIA  
rbria@timesleader.com

Meeting old friends and celebrating family occasions in the Back Mountain is becoming easier. Three new restaurants, two in Dallas and one in Shavertown, are offering different kinds of cuisine.

CuVenee Restaurant and Bar opened December 1 and Thirty-One Lake has a tentative opening date of December 11. A third eatery, a hibachi and sushi bar, is moving into the Back Mountain Shopping Center.

Bill Kammerer recently quit his job as food and beverage manager at the Westmoreland Club to start a family with his wife, Christine Mazza-Kammerer. When the site of the former Black Duck Grille in the Dallas Shopping Center became available, he was

asked to look at the space by a friend. The couple went to take a peak at it in mid-September, and before they knew it, they were the new owners of CuVenee Restaurant and Bar.

"We stopped by to see it and just fell in love with it and jumped on it," Bill said. "Yeah, that's basically it," added Christine. "We had no intention of buying a restaurant at all."

CuVenee is named after a Cruvenet, a French system that allows wine to be on tap by pumping nitrogen into it to assure freshness and controlled temperature. The Kammerers Americanized the name Cruvenet and are calling their restaurant CuVenee. CuVenee has three Cruvenet units, allowing for 12 wines, eight red and four white, to be kept on tap.

Bill has been working in the

### IF YOU GO:

CuVenee Restaurant and Bar: Dallas Shopping Center, Dallas. Open Monday through Friday for lunch, and Monday through Saturday for dinner. Half-priced drinks will be offered from 5 to 7 p.m. on weekdays. CuVenee is all non-smoking and casual dress is acceptable. Reservations are recommended. Thirty-One Lake Street: 31 Lake Street, Dallas. Open from 5 to 10 p.m. daily for dinner. The bar will be open 4 p.m. to close daily. Casual attire is acceptable and reservations are recommended.

fine dining restaurant since he was 13 years old. Aside from his position at the Westmoreland Club, he has worked as a waiter at Greco's, Wyoming Valley Coun-

See EAT, Page 9



S. JOHN WILKIN/THE TIMES LEADER

CuVenee Restaurant and Bar in the Dallas Shopping Center is equipped with a cruvenet system that allows wine to be poured through a nitrogen-fed tap system. The nitrogen system prevents opened wines from changing flavor through oxidation.