

CIVIC BRIEFS

Ecumenical musical comes to Music Box

"Meshuggah-Nuns," the new ecumenical "Nunsense" musical by Dan Goggin will be held today, April 6, and April 10-13 at the Music Box Dinner Playhouse, 196 Hughes St., Swyersville.

Tickets are available for dinner/show or show only. Curtain time is 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays. Dinner is served 90 minutes before curtain.

Call 283-2195 or 800-698-PLAY for reservations.

Battlefield guide will speak to Round Table

The Wyoming Valley Civil War Round Table will introduce Paul Cooksey as its speaker at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 10, in the lower level of the Daddow-Isaacs American Legion Post, Route 415, Dallas.

A licensed battlefield guide at Gettysburg for 23 years, Cooksey will give his presentation on "Pickett's Charge." The program is open to the public.

Spaghetti dinner scheduled for April 12

The Franklin Twp. Volunteer Fire Company will hold an all-you-can-eat spaghetti dinner from 4 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 12. Dinners include spaghetti, meatballs, salad, bread and butter, beverage and dessert.

Cost is \$6 for adults, \$3 for children ages 7-12 and free for those 6 years of age and younger.

Proceeds from this event help support the company, equipment, and training.

For advance tickets, call 333-5970.

Pickering Society to meet on Saturday

The Colonel Timothy Pickering Society Children of the American Revolution will hold its second annual meeting on Saturday, April 12, at the Castle Inn in Dallas.

Officers for the 2008-2009 year will be installed. The speaker for the meeting will be James May, Chaplain US Army Retired.

For more information, please contact pickeringssociety@yahoo.com.

Walkathon benefits Children's Association

Northeast Pennsylvania Family, The region's original family resource guide, is sponsoring the "Do It For The Kids" Walk-A-Thon and Fun Day to benefit Wyoming Valley Children's Association at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 12, at the Children's Association's future home - 1133 Wyoming Avenue, Forty Fort.

Registration begins at 9 a.m. The event will include a 5K (3.1 mile) walk, children's

activities, a bake sale and more.

All proceeds from the event will be used by Wyoming Valley Children's Association to provide physical, occupational and speech therapy to local children who have disabilities and preschool education to all children.

To register to walk, call Wyoming Valley Children's Association at 829-2453.

Chicken Bar-B-Que set for April 13

A Chicken Bar-B-Que will be held from noon to 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 13, at the Noxen Volunteer Fire Company, Stull Road.

Price is \$7 per diner and takeouts will be available.

Victorian Dinner will benefit CCK group

The Wilkes-Barre Women's Organization for Networking (W.W.O.N.) will sponsor a "Victorian Dinner" to benefit "Community Cares for Kids" (CCK), an all-volunteer organization operating on children with severe birth defects and disfiguring injuries, at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 17, at Tribeca Center (formerly Victoria Inn), Route 315, Pittston.

The night will feature an Introduction on CCK by Dr. Francis Collini, board-certified plastic surgeon; Lisa Lewis, "A Victoriana Lady," speaking on the Victorian and Edwardian eras along with vintage clothing, demonstrations and props; music by "Melinda" featuring the soft music of various artists such as James Taylor and Elton John.

There will be a buffet dinner, dessert and cash bar and raffle tickets available.

Cost is \$36 per person. For tickets and additional information, contact Mary Ann Rubin at 298-2616.

Open Mic Night slated for April 19

An Open Mic night for poetry and acoustic music will be held at 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 19, at the Mary Stegmaier Mansion, Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre.

The event is being conducted by Janelle Marshall, a junior at Dallas High School, as her senior completion project and is open to high school and college students only.

Anyone wishing to perform should pre-register by April 15 by calling 675-0163. Prizes will be awarded.

VULCAN

Continued from Page 1

Spohrer and his six children operated Marney Railroad at the site on weekends as the railroad provided passengers with scenic rides along the river.

Marney Railroad continued to run until the flood of 1972 devastated the Henschel and Son engine which was sold and now sits in a barn in St. Mary's, Pa.

Not even a flood could dampen Spohrer's interest in train engines. Within a year after he retired from practicing law in 1993, he purchased a Cagney steam locomotive engine that had been manufactured in 1903 and used at an amusement park. After obtaining 600 feet of panel track for the engine, Spohrer spent 1996 to 2002 laying track at the Goodwill No. 2 Hose Co. Bazaar in Plymouth and giving rides to attendees for a fee which he donated to the fire company. The Cagney engine was sold in 2005 to the Strasburg Railroad in Lancaster County, where it operates daily.

While touring the Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton in 1987, Spohrer noticed what looked like a Vulcan engine. When he learned the tour guide had no idea what a Vulcan engine was, he realized there was a need to promote awareness of the engines.

Vulcan engines were the product of Vulcan Iron Works in Wilkes-Barre. The company opened in 1849 and produced mostly steam locomotives that were shipped worldwide. In 1883, Pittston Iron Works, Wilkes-Barre Iron Works and Vulcan Iron Works merged with a \$586,000 capital, amounting to what Spohrer says would be the equivalency of about \$25 million today.

The Vulcan office was in the building on South Main Street in Wilkes-Barre where the Wilkes-Barre Area School District Administration is now housed. Other Vulcan locations were in South Wilkes-Barre, Hanover Township and West Pittston. The American, British, French, German and Italian armies all owned Vulcan engines and Vulcan engines were rampant in Northeast Pennsylvania coal yards. Many of the engines were sold during World War I and World War II. At its peak during World War II, the company employed about 2,500 people.

"Vulcan was a very prestigious place to work," Spohrer said.

After the war, Vulcan switched to making diesel electric engines, but struggled to compete against General Electric and General Motors and was forced into bankruptcy in 1954.

Vulcan Engine No. 4385 was manufactured by Vulcan Iron Works in 1942 in Wilkes-Barre. It was one of the first diesel electric



George Spohrer and Ron Delevan, owner of RMDI Locomotive Services at the Coxton Railyard in Duryea, are shown in front of Vulcan Engine No. 4385. Vulcan Engine No. 4385, which weighs over 45 tons, was taken apart into two pieces and lifted by crane onto two flat bed trucks in order to be transported to RMDI.



Vulcan Engine No. 4385 sits at RMDI Locomotive Services at the Coxton Railyard in Duryea. Owned by the Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority, the train awaits restoration to its original 1942 condition.

engines built for the U.S. Army and was sent to San Antonio, Texas. After the war, the engine went into private industry.

Engine No. 4385 returned to Wilkes-Barre in the 1970s when it was bought by the City of Wilkes-Barre. Marvin Roth, a local vending distributor, procured the engine along with 20 rail cars and the Market Street Square station complex. Roth turned the site into a restaurant and hotel. The property was later sold to Thom Greco and Vulcan Engine No. 4385 deteriorated from weather, vandals and thieves.

In 2005, Spohrer looked into the possibility of obtaining Vulcan engine No. 4385 and having it restored. The Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority purchased Market Street Square complex and Spohrer was put in charge of the engine's restoration.

The authority owns 65 miles of railroad in the county from Avoca to Ashley on the east side of the Susquehanna River and from Exeter to Kingston on the west side of the river. Spohrer would like to see the engine run with passenger cars and a dining

car to provide people with a scenic ride of the Susquehanna River. He says the closest dining car train ride available is in the Williamsport area and is very popular, with reservations booking weeks in advance.

"Sadly, when you get out of this area people think of us as anthracite coal and the United Mine Workers and strikes," Spohrer said. "By restoring this engine to operating condition, we'll be announcing to the world Wilkes-Barre was a center of industry other than coal."

Vulcan Engine No. 4385, which weighs over 45 tons, was taken apart into two pieces and lifted by crane onto two flat bed trucks. The sections were transported to RMDI Locomotive Services at the Coxton Railyard in Duryea. RMDI owner Ron Delevan paid for the crane and transportation costs.

Spohrer says it will be easy to restore the engine because it still has two Cummins diesel engines and has replaceable Westinghouse generators and motors. It's now just a matter of raising the money needed to do so.

"I wanted to preserve it, at least the memory of it, because for 105 years Wilkes-Barre produced a product found throughout the world."

George Spohrer
Restoring Vulcan diesel engine

Vulcan Pride Ltd. is the non-profit, tax-deductible charity formed to raise money for the engine. So far, about \$17,000 of the \$175,000 to \$200,000 needed to restore the engine has been raised. Zebra Communications, a student-run public relations agency at Wilkes University, has volunteered its services to assist with raising funds. With Zebra's help, over \$1,100 was raised in one day last fall at a fundraiser at Barnes & Noble in downtown Wilkes-Barre.

Zebra's latest effort to help Vulcan Pride Ltd. is the upcoming gala. Spohrer will attend the gala and is willing to answer questions about Vulcan Iron Works but isn't sure yet whether he will be dressed 1940s style.

"I'd have a little trouble getting into my Navy uniform," the military veteran joked.

Spohrer is also hoping to secure state or federal grant money for the preservation.

Once enough money has been raised, it should take about 18 months to restore the engine and Spohrer would like to see the entire project complete in two years. He would also like to be an engineer for the Vulcan Engine No. 4385, as he is qualified to operate it.

"The important thing is to introduce to your generation that Vulcan was known worldwide," Spohrer said. "That's why I want to restore it. That's why I'm excited about this."

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