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## BMT Community Partnership goes public

Newly-formed organization holds first meeting at Misericordia's Insalaco Hall.

By REBECCA BRIA  
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The Back Mountain Community Partnership officially went public with its first meeting on Thursday, June 18, at Insalaco Hall on the campus of Misericordia University.

The partnership is the idea of Senator Lisa Baker (R-Lehman Township) and Misericordia University President Michael MacDowell, who initially invited Back Mountain communities to meet about forming an inter-municipal alliance last November.

The municipalities have been meeting monthly ever since to form the partnership which will allow them to work on various projects and possibly secure

more grant money in the Back Mountain. Each community has the ability to opt in or out of a project. A budget will be set up for each project and projected expenses are being compiled for the next 18 months.

NEPA Alliance, a regional community and economic development organization, assisted in the formation of the partnership and will continue to provide help and has agreed to cover legal expenses.

Participating municipalities include Dallas, Franklin, Jackson, Kingston and Lehman townships and Dallas Borough.

Representatives from the six municipalities elected officers for the partnership at the meeting through the end of 2010. They are Al Fox, chairman; Jim Reino, vice-chairman; Patricia Peiffer, secretary/treasurer; Tracey Carr, recording secretary; Attorney Jeffrey Malak, legal con-

**"This is a historic moment for the Back Mountain area...the cooperation that started here I think is going to be a contagious event."**

Jim Reino  
Partnership vice-chairman

sult; and NEPA Alliance, administrative agency.

"This is a historic moment for the Back Mountain area...the cooperation that started here I think is going to be a contagious event," Reino said.

Members of the partnership are already planning to apply for a Department of Environmental Protection Energy Conservation Grant through the PA Conservation Works Recovery Grant Program.

It is beneficial for several municipalities to apply jointly for the grant because they would

not be required to match any percentage of the funding as an individual municipality must do. The competitive grant will be capped at a \$500,000 maximum.

The partnership must submit projects to be funded by the grant that would increase energy efficiency by at least 25 percent and reduce energy consumption and energy costs through efficiency improvements. Kingston, Jackson and Lehman townships and Dallas Borough plan to participate in the grant.

A second project planned is the replacement of old street

signs. According to Fox, the project is necessary because the state is mandating the replacement of worn street signs by the end of 2011. John "Jay" Wilkes, who was not at the meeting, has volunteered to put together a list of street names and coordinate with the townships.

Yet another project in the works by the partnership is the creation of a Back Mountain community map that would show municipality borders. NEPA Alliance drafted a preliminary map as a rough idea and the partnership intends to get sponsors for the map to pay for any associated costs.

Joseph Chacko and Alan Baranski of NEPA Alliance gave a special presentation about their organization to members of the partnership. Fox says he hopes to bring in a different group each month for a presentation regarding matters that deal with the

municipalities.

The partnership is inviting the Back Mountain Business Association to attend the July meeting.

"It's just a great thing to see how all of this is coming together to benefit the community," said Rep. Karen Boback (R-Harveys Lake) who attended the meeting.

Other issues discussed at the meeting include natural gas drilling and the passing of Act 32, which will make the collection of earned income tax countywide.

Jackson Township resident Ed Chesnovitzh attended the meeting and commended the partnership officials for working together. He also inquired about solutions to multiple streets with the same name throughout Back Mountain municipalities.

Fox said that the county E-911 standardized addressing project will look at such an issue.

## The youngest animator yet?

By REBECCA BRIA  
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Noah Sunday-Lefkowitz has produced five, 5-minute claymation movies. And he's only 13 years old.

That's quite a feat - since Sunday-Lefkowitz creates the characters, sets, lighting, stories and animation himself.

The son of Jay Lefkowitz and Lisa Sunday-Lefkowitz, of Shavertown, Sunday-Lefkowitz presented a program on claymation to 64 children and 28 adults during the morning of Thursday, June 18, in the children's room of the Back Mountain Memorial Library. The presentation was part of the national summer reading program, "Be Creative @ Your Library," going on at the library.

Sunday-Lefkowitz spoke about the art of claymation, showed one of his movies and had the children make a clay sculpture.

"I think they were very thrilled and I think they came away with, 'I want to do this,'" Sunday-Lefkowitz said of the children who attended his presentation. "I think I gave them an opinion that, 'Not

only is it really cool, but I can do this,' which is what I try to do."

According to Sunday-Lefkowitz, claymation is a type of movie making where a person crafts small clay sculptures. He or she then takes photos of the characters that slightly vary their movement and when the photos are flipped through in sequence, the characters appear to be moving.

"When I was in fourth-grade I saw the movie, 'Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit' and I really thought it was amazing because I knew it wasn't a drawing, I knew it was animation," Sunday-Lefkowitz said. "I searched it on a computer to see how they did it."

Sunday-Lefkowitz learned the basics of claymation at a summer camp at Penn State Wilkes-Barre, but taught himself most of what he knows through research and watching behind-the-scenes clips from claymation movies.

It takes Sunday-Lefkowitz about three months to complete the entire process for a 5-minute claymation film. He is most proud of the movie he showed at the library called, "Furniture Finale,"



Noah Sunday-Lefkowitz, 13, presents a program about his award-winning claymation videos to a crowd of over 75 people at the Back Mountain Memorial Library.

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in which house furniture comes to life during the day and goes back into place when someone comes home.

In the summer of 2006, Sunday-Lefkowitz heard the Public

Broadcasting Service (PBS) was looking for 12 children with unique talents from across the country for television commercials on PBS KIDS GO! He auditioned in Philadelphia and was se-

lected from thousands of other children to be featured with his claymation work in a 30-second television segment.

Sunday-Lefkowitz was filmed at his home in Shavertown in Sep-

tember 2006 and the segment of him has aired on PBS stations nationwide ever since.

Sunday-Lefkowitz captured

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## Parents' group markets Gate of Heaven school

By REBECCA BRIA  
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A group of volunteers from Gate of Heaven Roman Catholic School in Dallas have put together a marketing committee to promote the school.

The half dozen parent volunteers and Principal Abe Simon meet at the school at least once a month in an attempt to boost enrollment and market the school. The committee formed during the summer of 2008 and is a subgroup of the parent-teacher group.

Marketing committee members at the June 23 meeting included Principal Simon, John

Kuderka, Myrna Cantando, Mary Lynn Pizzolato, Matt Dewees and John Hornlein.

Although the marketing committee members do not have specific roles, they do take turns chairing projects. They have completed several projects in the last year, with the largest one being a spring carnival open to the public and existing Gate of Heaven students and their families. The event recruited about six new students.

Enrollment at the school for kindergarten through eighth-grade is at 201 students and an additional 39 students are in the pre-kindergarten program.

Another project was the resurrection of the school's Web site last fall. The site was created in 2006 but had not been updated regularly.

The committee also put together a brochure about the school to distribute throughout the area.

"One of the things we looked at was we're targeting the Back Mountain Area, but we're moving into the Tunkhannock area," Kuderka said.

Kuderka says the group is currently advertising the school at the Dietrich Theater in Tunkhannock.

Not everybody who lives in the Back Mountain realizes Gate of Heaven School exists, either. Dewees and Hornlein both attended Misericordia University and never knew about the school, so the group feels getting the word out is important.

The group is looking into purchasing booth space at various events to advertise the school. Group members are also trying to volunteer to work events together such as the fall festival at The Lands at Hillside Farms.

Another effort of the group is to reconnect with school alum-

The committee has formed its own budget separate from that of the school to raise money for continued marketing efforts. It has conducted several fundraisers, including a t-shirt sale for students who went to Knoebel's Amusement Park and a gator car magnet sale since the school mascot is the gator.

Currently, the group is selling raffle chances for tickets to a Penn State University football game.

The parents say even though many other Catholic schools in the diocese have closed, they are not worried. They believe strong enrollment, economical tuition, before and after-school care and technology will keep them alive.

"We're trying to take away doubts or concerns people might have," Kuderka said. "And, most importantly, the kids are getting a good education."



Members of the marketing committee at Gate of Heaven School are, from left, Myrna Cantando, John Kuderka, Mary Lynn Pizzolato, John Hornlein and Matt DeWees.

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