

# The DALLAS POST

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Serving the communities of the Dallas and Lake-Lehman School Districts

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## Lots to look forward to as schools open

By REBECCA BRIA  
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As school bells ring for the first time this August, new programs and faculty are awaiting students. Here's a roundup of what's new at Back Mountain schools.

### Gate of Heaven School

Abraham Simon has been named principal of Gate of Heaven School in Dallas beginning this school year. Simon has been at Gate of Heaven for 26 years, most of which he served as a math teacher in grades five through eight.

"The school is like my second home," Simon said. "I spend a lot of time here. I enjoy it."

The school's previous principal, Mary Jane Kozick, has been transferred to the position of principal at St. Mary's Assumption School in Pittston.

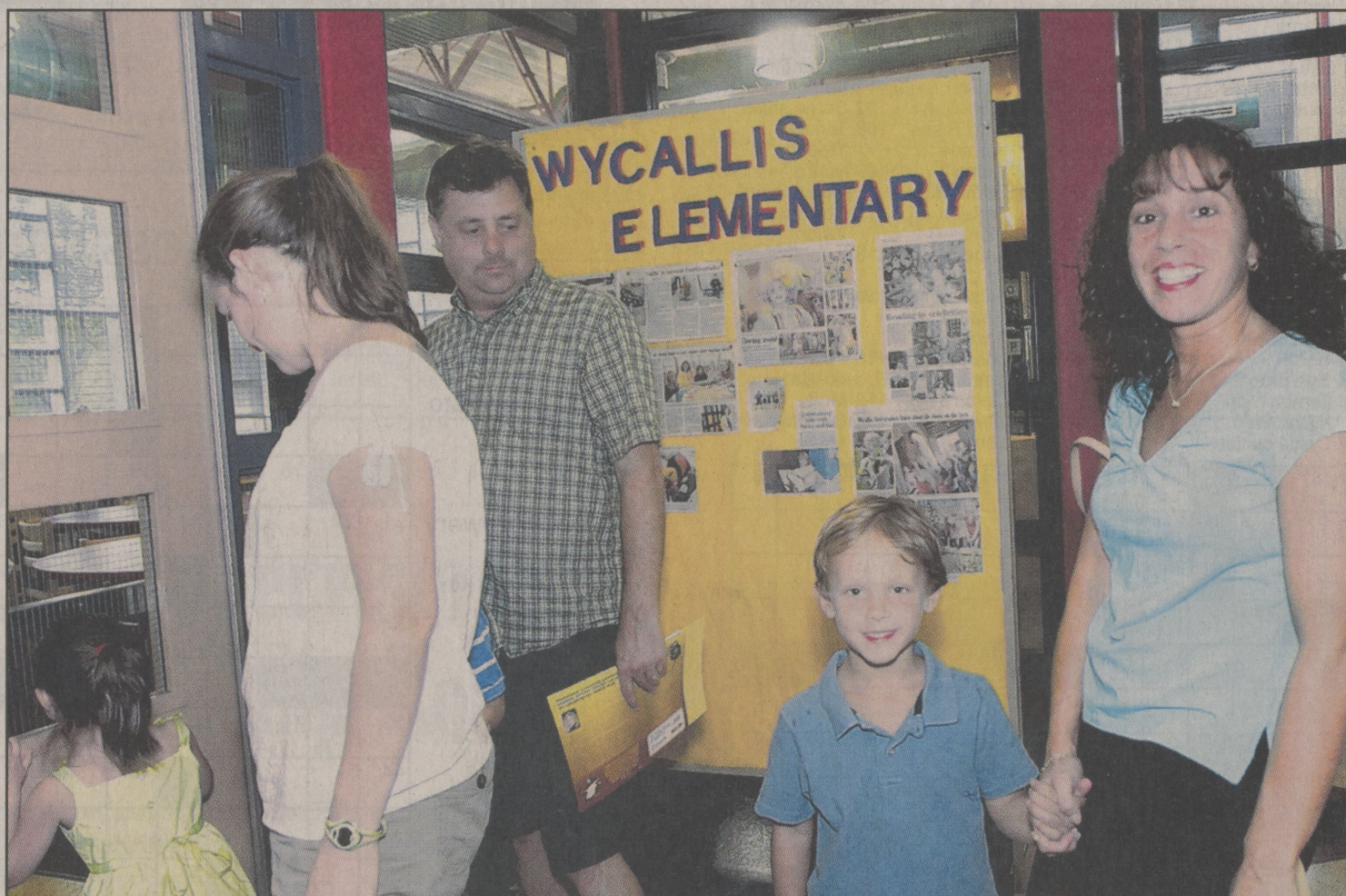
The preschool program has moved into the elementary building. A primary wing and an intermediate wing were created in the building and the middle school will remain in the back of the main school building. A new computer lab was also added for students to work in with their classroom teachers.

In addition, Gate of Heaven Church remodeled the bathrooms in the church lobby over the summer. Simon says this will help the school because the children share the lobby restrooms with the church.

"The school is very grateful to the parishioners of Gate of Heaven Church because it is a benefit to us," Simon said.

### Dallas Elementary School

Each classroom at Dallas Elementary School has been updated to include three student workstations and one teacher workstation, thanks to a \$100,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The grant money was shared in district classes in grades kindergarten



Austin Finarelli and his mother, Jenine, of Trucksville, wait in line to register for kindergarten at Wycallis Elementary School.

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through eighth-grade. Workstations contain a keyboard and screen which allows users to work online or on any Web-based program. It does not contain an individual hard drive.

The Accelerated Reader Program will kick into full gear this year. The program was originally implemented in the second semester of last school year. The Accelerated Reader Program provides each child with an individual reading goal. Students read books and take tests on what they read online. For each book and test they complete, the children are given points. Students who

meet their goal at the end of the year receive a reward.

Inclusion reading will begin in August at both Dallas and Wycallis elementary schools. In the past, children with learning disabilities were pulled out of their regular classroom for isolated reading instruction. Beginning this year, the students will instead remain in their regular classroom, but will receive the adaptations they need to succeed. Multiple teachers will also be in the classroom to assist.

PSSA Translator software will allow teachers to take previous Pennsylvania System of School

Assessment results for students in grades three to five and develop an individualized learning path on Compass software. Compass, which the school got last year, is a Web-based program that provides reading and math enrichment and mediation.

Teachers will also begin to use Reading A to Z, an online Web site where teachers can administer a test to gauge students' reading levels and differentiate each student's reading and development.

"Our big theme this year is differentiation," said Principal Tom Traver. "We're going to make sure

the needs of all students are met."

New teachers for the 2009-10 school year are Megan McAndrew, first-grade; Kristyn Ecnor, fourth-grade; and Kim Natitus, a long-term substitute who will fill in for fifth-grade teacher Crystal Seidel the first half of the year and for fifth-grade teacher Kerry Speziale the second half of the year.

### Wycallis Elementary School

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment results were received from the state and copies were mailed to Wycallis Elemen-

### STARTING DATES

**Dallas School District:** Monday, Aug. 24, for all students.

**Gate of Heaven School:** Monday, Aug. 31, for students in kindergarten through eighth-grade. Pre-K 3 and 4 students will begin classes on Tuesday, Sept. 1 and Wednesday, Sept. 2 depending on when the child registered.

**Lake-Lehman School District:** Monday, Aug. 31, for all students.

tary School families during July. The scores for reading and math in grades three, four and five increased significantly over the 2008 scores. Over 90 percent of the students in third and fourth-grade scored proficient in reading. Fifth-grade proficiency increased from 79 percent proficiency to 83 percent. Corrective Reading, Title I, Wilson Accelerated Reader and morning tutoring are attributed to this success.

"We're really very, very pleased," said Principal Kathleen McCarthy. "At every grade level we went up in reading and math."

Marcus Sowick is a new special education teacher at the school this year.

Like Dallas Elementary, Wycallis will do inclusion reading, continue the Accelerated Reader Program and use Compass and the PSSA Translator. They will also continue to have a morning remedial period in reading for grades three to five. In addition, a testing program called 4Sight will be administered to each student three times a year to make sure students are up to speed.

Back-to-School Night for kindergarten, first and second grades will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 3. Classroom teachers and teachers of special subjects will be on hand. Parents will meet in the gymnasium and then go into their child's classroom.

Volunteer orientation for par-

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### TRUCKSVILLE NURSERY SCHOOL

## New name comes with nursery school's 40th anniversary celebration

By EILEEN GODIN  
Dallas Post Correspondent

With just two teachers, teacher aides and about 30 students, the Trucksville Nursery School, located in the William and Melba Dickson Educational Wing of the Trucksville United Methodist Church, first opened its doors in 1969.

Today, there is a staff of about 20 teachers, aides and staff with as many as 150 students enrolled.

The school's board of directors agreed to celebrate the school's 40th anniversary by honoring previous and current teachers, students and staff members.

The milestone will be honored following the second worship service of the Trucksville United Methodist Church on Sunday, Sept. 13, in the nursery school lobby. The school's new name, Trucksville Early Childhood Education Center, will be introduced and a mural by Marie Stanish, former teacher and staff member, called the "Tree of Life," will be unveiled at that time.

Director Marjorie Adams said

the school board felt the new name will better reflect the school's educational practices.

School board member Morag Michael said, although the school board and the anniversary committee came up with the mural idea, Stanish dreamed up the whimsical tree pattern. Michael said the design "captures the feeling of a child's artwork."

The mural's theme is "Celebrating Children at Trucksville Nursery School" and has become a fundraiser as well. Staff and parents of students have an opportunity to purchase a leaf for \$50 or a swirl for \$75 on which they can have their name printed and become a visual part of the school's history.

According to Michael, the money from the mural fundraiser will go "into the pot" to pay for the \$2.2 million William and Melba Dickson Educational Wing constructed in 2002, offering the school much-needed room to expand and grow.

Adams said before the new wing was constructed, space was limited, noting that the space previously used for an administrative office was so small it is now used as a utility closet.

The school's baby steps started in 1967 when Carol King started a nursery school program which she operated for two years before moving away from the area. The Reverend Charles Gommer of the Trucksville Unit-

ed Methodist Church saw the importance of the program in the community and persuaded church members to continue it.

Gommer's wife, Viola, became the first coordinator of the program.

"At the time, there were very few places for preschool children to go in the Back Mountain," Violet Gommer said.

The school took the hands-on curriculum started by King and built on it. Gommer said ideas from the church's Sunday School program were taken and "modified for all religions."

"There was not much out at that time for this type of school," she said. "We did a lot of hands-on learning to stimulate a child to develop a long-time love of learning."

Gommer explained the children would dig potatoes at a local farm and do an art project like a Mr. Potato Head with some, then prepare and cook others to eat.

"We looked for social and environmental ways for the children to learn," she said. "The A, B, Cs and 1, 2, 3s are learned through play. Children learn best through playing."

Looking at the school now, Gommer is pleased to see many of the same concepts being used today.

"It pleases me to see the teachers and staff really give it their all and make the children their priority," she said.



Muralist Marie Stanish, of Shavertown, a teacher and curriculum planner for the Trucksville Nursery School, works on a wall that will commemorate the school's 40th anniversary in September.

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Adams said the goal is to keep a progressive early education program and strive to make it the best.

Adams said the nursery school

will offer a new program called Kindergarten Extension this year where children enrolled in morning kindergarten classes in the Dallas School District can

ride a bus to the nursery school for an enrichment program.

"We are continually looking for new ways to service the community," she said.



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