

The DALLAS POST

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Community rallies around house fire victims at lake

By REBECCA BRIA
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IF YOU GO...

Spaghetti dinner fundraiser for Dan and Carole Samson
Friday, Jan. 15
6 to 10 p.m.
Harveys Lake American Legion
State Route 415 and Annabelle Street, Harveys Lake
Tickets are \$10 each and may be purchased in advance at Javer's Store, the Harveys Lake American Legion and Harveys Lake Bistro. They may also be purchased at the door.

Dan and Carole Samson lost everything when their Harveys Lake home caught fire on New Year's Eve.

Now Harveys Lake Borough Council, of which Carole Samson is a member, and Harveys Lake American Legion are joining forces to hold a spaghetti dinner fundraiser to help the couple.

The dinner will be held from 6 to 10 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 15, at the Harveys Lake American Legion, State Route 415 and Annabelle Street, Harveys Lake.

When council member Betty Jane West learned of the fire, she got in touch with fellow council member Larry Lucarino and suggested they help. Lucarino is commander of the Harveys Lake American Legion, of which the Samsons are members.

Carole Samson was the Har-

veys Lake Borough secretary for 18 years and has been a member of council for the past two years.

Harveys Lake Fire and Ambulance Fire Chief David Davis said Carole Samson noticed smoke coming from one of the rooms in the couple's two-story home on Samson Lane off of Queen of Peace Road on Dec. 31 and called 911 at 11:16 p.m. The Samsons then exited the house along with one of their cats.

Davis said the extent of the fire, water and smoke damage to the home was nearly 100 percent. The roof collapsed in the

center and the roof and walls in the middle part of the home are gone.

"We had a little bit of an icing situation, but we were able to get tankers up and down," Davis said, adding that the borough's road department dumped cinders at the scene to help melt the ice.

About 50 to 60 firefighters and five or six fire trucks responded to the scene, Davis said. Harveys Lake Fire and Ambulance was assisted at the fire by Kunkle Fire and Ambulance, Noxen Fire, Idetown Fire and

Sweet Valley Fire and Ambulance.

According to Davis, a state police fire marshal ruled the cause of the two-alarm blaze as undetermined.

Davis said the Samsons did have insurance on their home and that they are currently staying with friends. A second cat that lived in the home was still missing as of Jan. 4, he said.

Tickets for the spaghetti dinner are \$10 each and may be purchased at Javer's Store, the Harveys Lake American Legion or Harveys Lake Bistro.

West said each of the three units of the Harveys Lake American Legion also donated \$500 to the Samsons, a \$1,500 total donation.

A trust fund has also been set up for the Samsons. Donations may be sent to the Samson Fire Victim Fund, PNC Bank, 325 Memorial Highway, Dallas, PA 18612.



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

The house of Dan and Carole Samson off of Queen of Peace Road in Harveys Lake was destroyed by fire on December 31.

Pickett's Charge and its memorabilia fade away

By CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK
Dallas Post Correspondent

Salvatore and Lori Leggio have purchased the Pickett's Charge restaurant property for \$438,000, according to a deed filed with the Luzerne County Recorder of Deeds. They plan to completely remodel and reopen the restaurant in the spring for dinners with an Italian theme. The couple owns and operates Leggio's Pizza and Restaurant on Route 315 in Plains.

Not unlike the historic and culminating battle for which it was named, Pickett's Charge Restaurant in Dallas was the scene of a final auction last Monday where authentic and decorative memorabilia that has, along with its breakfasts and prime rib dinners, delighted customers for the last 31 years was sold to the highest bidder.

Throughout the day, customers, friends and Civil War buffs wandered through the landmark restaurant, joking and reminiscing with the man who started the restaurant and has become a Back Mountain legend - Tom Pickett.

"Are you going to auction-off the broccoli salad recipe?" asked Trudy Hazenski. Pickett joked back. "Sure, and I'm going to do a Pickett's Charge recipe book, too," he quipped.

Not sure if he is related to the more famous Gen. Pickett, Tom Pickett was born in Wilkes-Barre and raised in Laceyville. In 1978, he bought the Schriber cottage on the corner of Center Hill Road and Route 415, enlarging it later. At the same time, he sold the Fireplace Restaurant in Tunkhannock which he also operated for 10 years. Pickett capitalized on the name and Civil War theme, all the while attempting to keep the place authentic.

Larry Hilbert, a hunting part-

ner of Pickett's and a next-door business owner, has visited the restaurant every morning where Norma, a waitress, would have hot water ready for Hilbert's tea. Hilbert remembers the great New Year's Eve parties in the 80s and 90s and a full bar after monthly Rotary meetings.

The congenial staff will be missed as much as will Pickett and his family: his wife, Becky, and his eight children, Lynne, Tommy, Megan, Chelsea, Chad, Liz, Heather and Jen all of whom worked at the family business at one time. The restaurant has generously given back to the Back Mountain community, supporting its charitable and community efforts.

It has accommodated funerals, weddings and organizational dinners, lunches and breakfasts with a staff of 55 employees.

Pickett, who will celebrate his



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Tom Pickett, owner and originator of Pickett's Charge Restaurant in Dallas for the last 34 years, looks over and prices some antiques he used to decorate his landmark business. Pickett is retiring and the restaurant has been sold.

69th birthday on January 11, cooked until 1977 when he says, "I took myself out of the kitchen." Pickett personally will miss

drinking "Ellis" coffee every morning; though, he admits to not having had time to reminisce or feel nostalgic yet.

Lou Katchko, of Forty Fort, a friend and regular daily patron at the restaurant, says he's sure the restaurant will be "sadly

missed by the many people who sometimes came from out of the area to dine and enjoy the antiques."



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

A buffet at the Castle Inn for the Back Mountain Men's Ecumenical Breakfast Group Men's Ecumenical Group begins with a prayer.

Men's breakfast group seeks new home

By REBECCA BRIA
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With Pickett's Charge closed, many of the restaurant's former regular customers will have to find a new place to dine.

That includes the approximately 80 men of the Back Mountain Men's Ecumenical Breakfast Group who met each Tuesday morning at the Dallas Township eatery.

Pickett's Charge on East Center Hill Road, owned by Thomas and Becky Pickett, closed Dec. 31 after 31 years of business.

Founded by Gene Kelleher and Robert Deeble, the Back Mountain Men's Ecumenical Breakfast Group was created because the two felt there were few social opportunities available exclusively for men in the Back Mountain.

There were just seven men, all members of Shavertown United

Methodist Church, at the group's first breakfast in September 2005. In November 2009, attendance hit an all-time high of 86 men from various churches and faiths.

For \$5 a week, the men were offered a hot buffet of scrambled eggs, bacon, French toast, potatoes and oatmeal as well as coffee and orange juice.

The group decided at its last meeting at Pickett's Charge on Dec. 29 to try three different places as possible permanent meeting sites. They will visit the Castle Inn in Dallas weekly in January, Irem Temple Country Club in Dallas in February and the Lakeside Skillet in Harvey's Lake in March.

"The men seemed to like that since we don't know that much about how they would handle it," Deeble said of the decision to try three different eateries. "I don't

think the Castle does breakfast regularly and we would only be there one day a week. Irem does do breakfast and so does the Lakeside Skillet."

According to Deeble, the cost of breakfast for the group at the Castle Inn will be \$5 per person not including a tip. Irem Temple Country Club will charge \$8 per person, but a tip is included.

Deeble says the Lakeside Skillet has not given the group a definite price, but did tell the men it would not be more than \$7 per

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