

The DALLAS POST

50¢

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

www.mydallaspost.com

KT cops are now seat technicians

By REBECCA BRIA
rbria@timesleader.com

Kingston Township Police officers Jonathan Chipego and Robert Spencer knew their department had a need for child safety seat technicians.

The two were used to fielding calls from residents seeking help from the police to install and check their children's car safety seats. But because no one in the department was certified, the police were forced to refer residents to the state police.

Chihego and Spencer decided to change that. With the approval of Sgt. Michael Moravec and township manager Kathleen Sebastian, the two officers volunteered to become federally-certified child safety seat technicians.

Chihego said he got the idea in part because his brother James Higgins, a municipal police officer in Vernon Township, N.J., is certified.

The officers completed the Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST) Certification course which was held at the Pennsylvania State Police Hazleton Barracks and consisted of eight hours of training for four days. The course involved classroom instruction, hands-on work with car seats and vehicles and participation in a community safety seat check.

Chihego and Spencer are the only police officers, aside from state troopers, who are certified locally, they said. However, there are civilians in the area, such as nurses, who are certified.

"Now it's something we can offer to our residents," Moravec said. "There have been a lot of times we've been called to the station or a residence and asked if we can put a seat in."

The National Child Passenger Safety Training Program, which partners with The National Child Passenger Safety Board, The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Safe Kids Worldwide, provided the training at a cost of \$75 per officer.

As CPSTs, the officers will put their knowledge to work through a variety of activities, including child safety seat checks where parents and caregivers receive education and hands-on assistance with the proper use of child restraint systems and safety belts.

Chihego and Spencer learned how to properly install a car seat, review a car seat based on a child's age and size, where it should be located based on the child and vehicle, ensure the seating position is correct and to check the seat for recalls and damage. They were also provided with an extensive child safety seat checklist.

The officers said during CPST training they were told a story by a state trooper about parents who requested to have their child safety seats checked before going on va-

Residents of Kingston Township who need assistance with a child safety seat may now schedule an appointment with the officers by calling township police at 696-1175. The officers said it takes about 30 to 45 minutes to go through everything. Parents should bring their child seat instruction booklet as well as their vehicle manual.

caution. The trooper said the family got into a crash and its vehicle rolled over several times, but all of the children were safe.

In another story, the officers were told of a woman who was pregnant with triplets. The woman went to the state police and wanted to know if she could install three child seats in the back of her Volkswagen Beetle only to learn that she would not be able to do it safely.

Spencer said one thing many people don't realize is that child safety seats have an expiration date. He said the seats became unsafe after about six years because the molded plastic in them deteriorates.

One fact the officers learned is that swimming pool "noodles" (cylinder-shaped pieces of foam) are the only item approved to elevate and level rear-facing safety seats for children up to age 3. They also learned the LATCH system (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children) on the seat and the seat-belt cannot be used in conjunction with each other.

Moravec believes no other local officers are CPSTs because they are not aware the training exists. Manpower issues make it difficult for officers from small departments to undergo training.

Residents of Kingston Township who need assistance with a child safety seat may now schedule an appointment with the officers by calling township police at 696-1175. The officers said it takes about 30 to 45 minutes to go through everything. Parents should bring their child seat instruction booklet as well as their vehicle manual.

Moravec recommends parents schedule an appointment before their child is born.

Chihego and Spencer also plan to conduct a community child safety seat check in the Back Mountain sometime in the early summer. Any CPSTs interested in participating in the event are asked to call Chihego and Spencer at 696-1175.

"If you think it's installed correctly, you should still come by," Chihego said of child safety seats. "It's all about the safety of the child. We're not going to think anything of the parent."



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Kingston Twp. police officers Jonathan Chihego, left, and Robert Spencer have completed the Child Passenger Safety Technician

THE OFFICIAL START OF SUMMER



BILL TARUTIS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Jessica Lewis Houlihan, of Dallas, swims at Harvey's Lake Beach Association at Sunset Beach on opening day last Sunday. For more photos, please turn to page 5.

Hillside Cottage undergoing restoration

By EILEEN GODIN
Post Correspondent

IF YOU GO ...

Wanting to share a hidden jewel of the Back Mountain, volunteers at The Lands at Hillside Farms have completed restoration to the first floor of the Conyngham Family Cottage, opening its doors for weddings and other private parties.

The public is invited to see the progress of the Hillside Cottage during an open house weekend.

A cocktail party, hosted by the Back Mountain Business Association, will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. on Friday, June 11 at the cottage. Cost is \$20 for members and \$25 for non-members. Cocktails and a light dinner will be served. To make your reservations, call the BMBA at 675-9380.

A Wedding and Special Event Preview will be held from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday, June 13. Tickets are \$5 and are available at the Lands at Hillside Farms Dairy Store in Trucksville.

The event will showcase business partners such as florists, caterers and wine to make any occasion memorable, said Chip Morgan, volunteer chairman of the cottage committee. He said tours of the finished rooms of the cottage will also be offered.

Nestled up on a hillside, obscure from the view of passers-by, the cottage is unique in so many ways. Morgan said the 1881 cottage can boast of having the first elevator in the Back Mountain, the first private in-ground pool and has entertained royalty.

After studying the journals of Jessie Gurthie Conyngham, Morgan noticed an entry that showed that Princess Lucinge of France was a guest at the cottage on July 17, 1935.

"I'm not sure of the connection of her to the Conyngham family," Morgan said. "They could have met her during a vis-

it to the Mount Washington Hotel in New Hampshire or from the French Monastery in Sayre, Pennsylvania."

Restoration of the first floor of the cottage began in 2007 and, according to Morgan, about \$700,000 and thousands of volunteer hours have been spent to bring the luster back to the gem.

"This home was renovated two other times," he said. "Once in 1890, when the third floor was added and again in 1905 when two sleeping porches, dining porches and an elevator were added."

The ultimate goal of the project is to turn the cottage into a bed and breakfast - a distant dream, however, as the second floor servants' quarters still need restoration and the third floor needs to be cataloged, organized and restored.

Chris Tweedy, director of development for The Lands at Hillside Farms, said before opening the cottage to overnight guests, an occupancy permit will need to be obtained from Kingston Township.

"I can see it becoming like a European hotel," Morgan said of the property. "People could step back in time."

Morgan said several ideas for future events to be held at the cottage include a Civil War reenactment and a Civil War tea. He said this year's Christmas events at the cottage will be quite spectacular.

"You will have to wait and see," he said with a smile of



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Chip Morgan examines a teacup that is part of the Conyngham family heirloom dining service. Originally enough to serve 250 people, the service is now down to 75.

what's to come..

Tweedy and Morgan agree the progress was made possible because of volunteers who have given their time.

Tom Welki of Shavertown, volunteers to help mow the grass on the sprawling property and said there are volunteer opportunities for everyone of every skill level on the farm.

"I like to volunteer," Welki said. "I firmly believe in the farm."

He said there is a job for anyone who wants to volunteer their time and talents whether it is painting, electrical work,

See HILLSIDE, Page 13

