

The DALLAS POST 50¢

Serving the communities of the Dallas and Lake-Lehman School Districts | www.mydallaspost.com

Absenteeism in schools will no longer be tolerated

By SARAH HITE
shite@mydallaspost.com

An attendance policy added to the state Department of Education code in 2006 is now being enforced in Back Mountain public high schools.

The policy, which states that students can lose their drivers' licenses or learners' permits for 90 days after three or more unexcused absences from school is having an effect on truant students at both the Dallas and Lake-Lehman school districts.

The policy is part of the Compulsory Attendance and Truancy Elimination Plan issued from

the state Department of Education in August 2006. It lists recommendations districts can implement to deter students from being frequently absent.

Dallas Superintendent Frank Galicki said the program is an option for districts to utilize in dealing with frequently absent students.

Galicki said District Magistrate James Tupper of Trucksville offered the idea to the Dallas School District, and administration worked on implementing the policy immediately.

The steps in the process for combating students who accumulate three or more unexcused absences vary among the

"When they have three unexcused absences, by the time they get the court hearing they bring in excuses."

District Justice James Tupper

two districts. Attendance officers said they call the student's home and send letters to parents, but these actions do not always stop students from skipping school.

"It's really a deterrent for kids," said Galicki.

The idea to implement the policy came from frustrated principals who didn't know

what else they could do to deal with certain students' low attendance.

Tupper said the problem lies in getting excuses to teachers on time.

"When they have three unexcused absences, by the time they get the court hearing they bring in excuses," said Tupper.

Norbert Swithers, home and

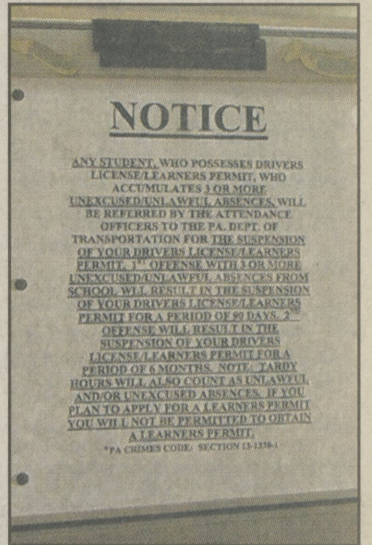
school visitor for the Dallas School District, said attendance rates are stable within the district, and this policy just reinforces that fact.

"Our overall attendance is 95 percent to date," he said. "We want to keep it that way."

He said informational flyers have been posted within the high school and he has spoken to classes and guidance counselors about what the policy means.

Swithers estimates that two or three students have lost their drivers' licenses as a result of the policy implementation.

See SCHOOLS, Page 12



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST
A notice posted on the window of the front office at the Dallas High School explains the state-mandated regulation regarding unexcused student absences.

A BALL WITH A CAUSE



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Susan Collini, right, one of the founders of Community Cares for Kids, greets guests as they arrive at the organization's annual Masquerade Ball at Newberry Estates. For additional photos, please turn to page 11.

'Dueling Divas' are delight to audience

By SARAH HITE
shite@mydallaspost.com

UPCOMING

You can see E.T. Gourmet in action in Really Cooking Café and Supper Club's new series of Friday night performances, which will begin at 9:30 p.m. on Feb. 4. There is a \$10 cover charge with a \$10 minimum food and drink purchase. For more information, visit www.reallycookingcafe.com.

From the cozy candles to the soft, dimmed lighting, one couldn't tell the difference between Really Cooking Café and Supper Club in Dallas and an intimate New York City piano bar on a recent Friday.

E.T. Gourmet, also known as 52-year-old restaurateur and creatively coifed Gregory Allen, entered onstage with gobs of blue eyeshadow, painted-on red lipstick and a cheeky grin that almost foreshadowed the entire Cabaret-style show called "The Dueling Divas of Dallas."

Allen and Judy Curtis, a classically-trained opera singer and professor at Misericordia University, spent the night vocally battling not to deem a winner, but to elicit response from the audience.

And those in attendance responded – from quiet chuckles to all-out guffaws as the mix of vaudeville and opera managed to put a smile on guests' faces throughout the evening.

Really Cooking has hosted Cabaret-style acts since it opened five years ago, and Allen said performers from Broadway have come to croon at the Dallas eatery in years past. "Dueling Divas" features a local flair that played on both Allen's and Curtis' tal-

ents for song and showmanship.

E.T. Gourmet is Allen's stage name, but throughout the show he changes characters to give the audience a "behind-the-scenes" look at his performance. He writes all the original material in the hour-long act, which is filled with local references, pop culture attributes and double entendre.

One of his creations is Sheila Steingoldbergstein-O'Brien, a Jewish-Irish hybrid who insists her stripper son get married, which seamlessly shifts into Yetta Timebaum, a sassy waitress at the Last Supper.

"Jesus Christ, party of 13!" Yetta yells.

Allen has been performing since he was 16 years old. He worked as a professional pianist for years before joining with George Creel to open the restaurant just off Route 309. Allen never expected to bring his talent to the masses in the Back Mountain.

See DIVAS, Page 12



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Mickey Finnet, of Pringle, and Joanne Race, of Dallas, dance to one of the songs at Ekklesia Coffee House.

Coffee house unites Christians in music

By SARAH HITE
shite@mydallaspost.com

As members of the Scranton-based Breakfree Band prepped for their set at Ekklesia Coffee House on Jan. 14, the hassle of unloading and setting up equipment after their 40-minute commute to Lehman was the last thing on their minds.

"It's like home," said lead singer Missyjean Barbuti.

The Ekklesia Coffee House, an extension of River of Life Church on Outlet Road in Lehman, features live Christian music and karaoke every Friday, as

well as homemade soups, sandwiches and dinner entrees – but that's not all it offers.

"We're a community of all different churches and this is a place where we can all come together," said frequent patron Brenda Karpinski, of Plains. The Living Hope Bible Church member has been going to the Ekklesia Coffee House for "quite a while" – since it began in June of last year.

Curt Strunk, organizer of the coffee house and worship leader at River of Life, said the coffee house is hosted by the River of

See COFFEE, Page 12



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Playing a Girl Scout, Gregory Allen entertains at a cabaret at Really Cooking in Dallas.



Sign up now at nepadailydeals.com
Get great deals every day!

50-90% OFF

fast & free