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The Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction started in 1947 in a barn on the property of former Dallas Post Editor Howard Ridley.

Library Auction steeped in history

By SARAH HITE
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The Back Mountain Library Auction started with humble expectations in 1947 by Howard Ridley, former editor and publisher of The Dallas Post, to benefit the new library serving the Back Mountain community.

Over the years, the community-based fundraiser has grown exponentially in size, goods and dollars and has become the most important part of keeping the library intact. It once provided at least one quarter of the library's budget, but library director Mar-

THE 65TH BACK MOUNTAIN LIBRARY AUCTION

See today's special insert for more information about the auction which starts Thursday.

tha Butler said, due to inflation and rising costs, the auction has netted about 12 to 15 percent of the budget for the past 16 years.

"It's a huge, huge help for the library," she said.

This will be the 65th year the library auction has graced the borough of Dallas, and though there are always new events, items and people to look forward to, a look back on auction history will show that at its heart, the auction is still a representation of

the Back Mountain community's spirit of generosity for the library.

From humble beginnings

In early 1947, a group of women gathered to generate ideas for keeping the library, established in 1945, afloat. Community donations were down and the library's financial reserves were running low.

After several scrapped ideas, Mrs. Lewis LeGrand remembered a friend of hers who had or-

ganized an auction as a fundraiser and was able to earn \$700. When LeGrand mentioned the idea to Ridley, he reportedly said, "Hell, we'll have an auction and make \$2,000!"

The first auction was held at Ridley's barn on Lehman Avenue, a short distance from the library grounds on Main Street. In addition to selling household goods, the auction also sold livestock such as horses, cows, sheep, pigs, seed and manure.

Three booths included a refreshment stand, baked goods and what is now considered Odds and Ends. The antiques commit-

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Christian-based school forming in Back Mtn.

Rock Solid Academy hopes to begin its first academic year in August 2012.

Five local churches are part of a committee to start a Christian-based private school in the Back Mountain.

Mark DiPippa, of Wilkes-Barre, has been hired as president and director of Rock Solid Academy, which hopes to begin its first academic year in August 2012.

DiPippa previously served as director of the Wyoming Valley Montessori School and the director of development for MMI Preparatory School.

He said many parents and church members in the Back Mountain expressed interest in founding a private school in the area about 18 months ago. Thanks to an anonymous donor's gift in April, the school has been given the green light for establishment.

In addition to the anonymous donor's gift, DiPippa said the school organizers are planning a \$1.5 million founding fundraising campaign this year to help with costs. He would also like to acquire endowed funds for the school to try to cut accumulated debt.

DiPippa said the school will be a kindergarten through eighth-grade school with hopes of eventually opening a high school. He said the school wants to focus on the development of "not only the body and mind, but also the spirit" of students.

Many families have expressed interest in becoming

For more information about Rock Solid Academy, contact Mark DiPippa by phone at 498-7777, e-mail him at mdippa-pa@gmail.com or visit the school's website at www.rocksolidacademy.org.

part of the school, and DiPippa said the plan is to keep tuition as affordable as possible.

The school will be Christian-based, but not limited to any sect or church. The five churches currently involved in its development include Back Mountain Harvest Assembly in Trucksville, First Assembly of God Church in Wilkes-Barre, Cross Creek Community Church in Trucksville, the Evangelical Free Church in Dallas and High Point Baptist Church in Larksville.

DiPippa would like to see more Christian churches have input in the school's development and several committees have been created to begin that process.

"We should have our curriculum finished by August," he said.

DiPippa said a location for the school is still in the planning stages - the founding group did approach officials from the now-closed Gate of Heaven School as an option, but DiPippa said church officials stated they were not in the position to discuss anything about the building's future at this time. Several other buildings in the Back Mountain are also being considered.

"When it's right, it will happen," he said.



The funnel cake brigade at the Gate of Heaven Church Bazaar consists of, from left, Diane Buckman, Angie Murray, Evelyn Napieralski, Marion Lanman and Ruth Hartzel.

School closing affects bazaar volunteers

Some declined to help while other wanted to make the GOH bazaar better than ever.

By SARAH HITE
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The familiar sound of potato pancakes sizzling in the distance accompanied a crowd slowly forming at the Gate of Heaven Church Bazaar on June 23.

Even a brief period of rain didn't stop attendees from sitting in an unenclosed area in front of a stage where a few young boys took turns performing "Never Say Never" by teen heartthrob Justin Bieber.

But some bazaar-goers noticed a different feeling at the annual event, as the three-day bazaar was held a little over a week after the closing of the church's Catholic elementary school.

The Rev. Daniel Toomey said

church attendance is still the same since the announcement of the school's closure in April, and he hopes it stays that way.

"The bottom line is (the bazaar) is community building," he said. "The school may be closed, but the church still exists."

Gate of Heaven parish and school were both built in 1951 in the heart of Dallas. The church began as an offshoot of St. Theresa's in Shavertown.

Toomey also serves as pastor of Our Lady of Victory Church in Harveys Lake. Our Lady of Victory once served as a mission church for Gate of Heaven, but eventually became an independent parish in 1969 due to the growing Catholic population in Harveys Lake, according to the church's website.

Bazaar organizer Bill Martin, of Dallas, said volunteers were affected by the announcement of the closure - some organizers declined to help, while others want-

ed to make the bazaar better than it's ever been.

"We thought it would hinder us," he said. "It kind of did. But a lot of new people jumped on board to help."

Even Toomey said he saw a lot of new faces at the bazaar's many booths during the event, which he said was a positive sign.

Judy Legg, of Dallas, was a familiar fixture at the lemonade stand - she's been working the event in different capacities for about 10 years.

She was a member of St. Casimir's in Pittston before it closed its doors in 2008, but always worked at the Gate of Heaven Bazaar with her daughter, Judy Panagakos, before Panagakos died of breast cancer in 2007. Now Legg is a full-time volunteer and parishioner of the church.

"Now, I'm just waiting for anything to happen," said Legg as she topped off a customer's lemonade cup. "There's so much

change, and people are miserable for no reason. Progress is progress."

Martin said the school closing influenced parishioners to make the church stronger, and the bazaar was the first step.

"People were concerned but everyone pulled together," he said.

One element missing from the event was its long-running Bingo table, but Martin said booths at the bazaar are subject to staffing issues every year.

"Usually that's young kids working (the Bingo booth)," he said. "The kid that signed up ended up taking some vacation time that week."

Martin said the game isn't a big money-generator for the event, but if the lack of Bingo was a major concern, the event staff would have rotated to keep it intact.

"We asked ourselves, 'Is it really worth pulling people?'" he said.

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DALLAS SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Board adopts 2011-2012 budget which includes 5% tax increase

By SARAH HITE
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By a 6-2 vote, the Dallas School Board adopted its final budget for the 2011-12 school year Tuesday night, which includes a 5 percent increase for district taxpayers.

Board members Dennis Gochoel Jr. and Maureen Matiska voted against the measure while Bruce Goeringer, Karen Kyle, Russell Bigus, Gary Mathers, Charles Preece and Catherine Wega voted for the hike. Richard Coslett was not present.

The increase from 11.0118 to 11.5824 mills for property owners in Dallas Borough and Dallas, Franklin and Kingston townships has been an expectation since the board first presented its \$32 million spending plan in January.

A mill is \$1 for every \$1,000 in assessed property value.

Business Manager Grant Palfey said the increase translates to an additional \$85 per an average assessed property value of \$154,500.

Palfey said the board had to increase taxes to fund the remaining costs of the new high school construction project, set to conclude

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this summer. The \$38 million project has been funded by taxpayers for the last eight years.

Prior to voting, Kyle said she disagreed with how the budget was balanced but is "100 percent behind financing the school." Several other board members agreed with her.

An unanticipated challenge of this year's budget was trying to figure out how to close the funding gap between what administrators expected to lose in state funding and the actual amount the district would lose.

When Gov. Tom Corbett presented the state budget in March,

the board had to maneuver around an \$896,000 budget shortfall, which was about \$500,000 more than what it expected to lose. Penny-pinching tactics, including not replacing retiring teachers, cutting before- and after-school tutoring programs, reducing a speech therapist position to an hourly rate and decreasing individual building budgets throughout the campus, led to a savings of about \$826,000.

The board also approved, in a 6-2 vote, to appoint Assistant Superintendent and Director of Curriculum and Instruction Paul Reinert to the position of Wycallis Ele-

mentary School principal in addition to his duties as director of curriculum and instruction.

Reinert will replace Kathleen McCarthy, who retired this year after 16 years of service. McCarthy's

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