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## Back Mountain Chamber of Commerce forms

By SARAH HITE  
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The Back Mountain Business Association and the Back Mountain Economic Development Council have merged to form the Back Mountain Chamber of Commerce.

Lynn Banta, chairman of the economic development council,

said the chamber will begin its membership drive in December and will soon hire a full-time executive director.

Owner of the Twin Stacks Center, Banta said the Back Mountain region has grown since the inception of the two groups, and a chamber of commerce will have more offerings to suit the needs of local businesses.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION...

To inquire about joining the Back Mountain Chamber of Commerce, call 675-9380.

For example, members will have access to a health care plan through the chamber.

"For small businesses, that's a godsend," she said.

Banta also cites more pres-

ence with the community as a benefit offered by forming a local chamber of commerce, as well as learning opportunities in seminars and expos.

"We're looking for a way to

help our businesses connect with our community. We think that's very important," she said. "We're looking for a way to say to new businesses that are starting this is a great place to start a business."

The chamber will also continue to offer what both the business association and economic development council have provided its members in the past.

Banta said the economic development council has a mentoring program for new business owners or businesses moving into the area.

"We have a group of executives willing to help a new business and we also have a great alliance with the Small Business Development Center in Wilkes-

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## Church seeks new location

By SARAH HITE  
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New Life Community Church is looking for a new home.

The church, located in the Twin Stacks Center along Route 415 in Dallas Township, began raising funds this year to find a suitable spot for its relocation.

Pastor Gideon Gaitano said the main motivation for the move is space – the church needs more of it. He said the church has about 75 members, and weekly attendance is between 80 and 90 people, on average, because many bring guests. The current space can only hold about 100 people.

Gaitano said the church has been in the Twin Stacks Center for about three years, and since then its membership has more than doubled. The church has had a presence in the Back Mountain for about 30 years.

"We would like to stay in the Back Mountain, preferably here in town to remain accessible and visible," he said.

Prior to the move to Dallas Township, Gaitano said the church was located in a barn, dubbed the Glory Barn, on Brace Road in Franklin Township. His offices are still located there, and the church occasionally holds events in its former location.

"It was very difficult to find a location in Franklin Township," said Gaitano. "But the Bible teaches, 'Go and make disciples.'"

A member of the church at the time had an office in the Twin Stacks Center and worked with the church and the owners to secure a new home.

### MORE INFO...

For more information about New Life Community Church or to make a donation towards its relocation fund, call 639-5433 or visit the church's website at www.newlifefamily.org.

"We're very grateful to the owners of Twin Stacks Center," he said. "It's given us the opportunity to grow."

Gaitano said the location allowed the church to become more visible and accessible, which he attributes to the church's growth.

"It also has to do with the way the Bible is being presented," he said. "It has to be relevant and practical. We also emphasize evangelism and discipleship and teach that you are a witness of the abundance of life Christ offers."

Gaitano said the church is looking for a place that can hold at least 300 people in the hope that the church membership will continue to grow. He said parking is also another important factor, but finding a building that looks like a church isn't.

"We're open to different options," he said. "Preferably, we'll find a site where we won't have to do a lot of remodeling or restructuring."

While many churches use their buildings as logos or representations of the community, Gaitano said the teachings of the church are the most important aspects of membership.

"Since we have no building, we have a discipleship message," he said. "We are consistent with the four statements – look to God, learn His word, love your neighbor, lead to Christ – in everything we do."



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Making dough is not really a guy thing, so Misericordia University student Brittany Kneal helps Robert Nichols from Lake-Lehman High School with the process at a collaborative bake and dinner as part of the teacher education program for people with special needs at the schools.

## Sharing a meal and life lessons

By SARAH HITE  
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Lake-Lehman students from a life skills class broke bread with budding teachers Wednesday at Misericordia University for a Thanksgiving celebration.

The meal signified the end of a semester-long education class at Misericordia in which the college students got hands-on experience working with special needs students.

The life skills class at Lake-Lehman Junior-Senior High School is for students who need to learn adaptable skills, said teacher Lee Sikora.

"These are students who cannot be maintained in a learning support classroom," said Sikora, of Sweet Valley.

Students mixed ingredients, kneaded dough and cut out cookies, then ate a traditional Thanksgiving meal while the cookies baked in an oven.

Life skills student August Headley, 16, chose a reindeer-shaped cookie cutter to use while making sugar cookies.

"I like animals because they're cute," she said.

For many of the Misericordia students, the class was the first time they worked hands-on with special needs students. Most said it was an "eye-opening experience."

"They are such an inspiration. I've learned the students can be verbal and engaging. I've learned from them as much as they've learned from me."

Brittany Kneal  
Misericordia University student



Lake-Lehman student August Headley and Nikki Pisacano from Misericordia University share table conversation during a Thanksgiving bake and dinner.

curve," said Coughlin. "I learned that the students are higher functioning than I had initially guessed them to be. (My class) had discussions about how we underestimated them – we were blown away."

Sikora said throughout the year, the life skills students are constantly out in the community to educate themselves and others around them.

"We go shopping, we go to the bank, we go swimming," said Sikora. "I try to get them out into the community as much as possible."

Teacher Education Professor Molly Vitale, who teaches the methods and life skills class at Misericordia, said most college students don't have an opportunity to work with special needs students in their field work, so the class is a unique experience.

"With this prolonged experience, the students get to build relationships," she said. "In special education, you get to see that people are people are people."

This is the second year Misericordia has worked with the students at Lake-Lehman. In previous years, students worked with the Circle of Friends program on campus, a college program dedicated to helping young women with special needs learn to live more independently. That program ended last spring due to lack of funding.

Sikora said the life skills students' parents tell her the students are now taking what they learned in the classroom and implementing it at home, such as making small meals for themselves.

"It's a transforming experience," she said.

Brittany Kneal, 21, of Dallas, said she's grateful for the experience to work with the life skills students.

## Reduced fees for Guard

Pennsylvania National Guard members and reservists recently deployed for 60 or more days may soon be eligible for reduced-fee hunting licenses, thanks to a bill sponsored by Sen. Lisa Baker (R-20). The Senate passed the measure unanimously on Monday.

"This bill is one more way we can thank our soldiers who are serving this nation with such courage and sense of duty," Baker said. "It is appropri-

ate that the Senate voted to extend this hunting privilege just a few days after Veterans Day."

Current law requires Guard members and reservists to be deployed for at least 180 days in the prior 24 months in order to qualify for the discounted license, but Baker's bill reduces the program's required time limit to 60 days.

"By reducing the minimum length-of-service requirements, the bill extends this benefit to several hundred National Guard members and Reservists who are often deployed for less than 180 days," Baker said. "This is another small way we can honor our military's contributions to this Commonwealth and country."

