

# Teachers dress down to fund school scholarships

By SARAH HITE  
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If you stop by the Lake-Lehman Junior/Senior High School on a Wednesday or Friday, chances are you might not be able to spot the teachers walking amongst the students.

That's because six days a month, teachers pay good money to wear blue jeans instead of slacks.

Language arts teacher Cathy Wolfe started the school's "dress down days" about four years ago as a way to wear comfortable clothing to work while also paying homage to former Lake-Lehman employees and students.

Teachers pay \$5 to wear less formal attire to work every other Wednesday, and the money funds book scholarships for graduating seniors, as well as school functions such as the Last Knight Lock-In.

"We were looking for some kind of fun fundraiser to help with the senior book scholarships," said Wolfe, who has been teaching at Lake-Lehman

for 29 years. "

Each dress down day also honors a deceased member of the Lake-Lehman family. Some honorees include former special education teacher Linda Futoma, who passed away in 2004, and Lake-Lehman grad Brian Welby, who passed away in 2009.



Cathy Wolfe

"They were all such a large part of the Lake-Lehman community when they were here," Wolfe said of the deceased.

The initial fundraiser was so successful that Regan Bombick, another teacher, sparked a district-wide way to keep comfortable while giving back.

Two years ago teachers and staffers in all four schools – the junior/senior high school and Lake-Noxen, Lehman-Jackson and Ross elementary schools – began paying \$5 a month to dress casually every Friday.

"It's a bargain," laughed Wolfe.

The money raised from the district-wide fundraiser is donated to designated community organizations, such as the American Red Cross or the Back Mountain Food Pantry.

"It's a wonderful way of giving back," said Wolfe. "It's a small way, but it's a good way."

Wolfe said the idea for the dress down days caught on quickly because, like students, teachers enjoy being comfortable.

"The students get to know that we, too, wear jeans, not just dress clothes," said Wolfe. "Plus, if you plan to go somewhere after school like the grocery store, you don't have to go in a dress and high heels."

The junior/senior high school fundraiser generates enough money every year to give book scholarships ranging from \$200 to \$500 to 25 graduating seniors.

"I know how expensive books are, and it's my hope that every senior goes to college," said Wolfe. "Even if the scholarship only pays for one book, that's one book the student or parents don't have to pay for."



Ninth-grade world history teacher Susan Ferentino wears a sweater and blue jeans during dress-down day at Lake-Lehman High School.

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Marilyn Gregorski relaxes at her home in Dallas. She has moved on from her career at The Meadows.

CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

## On to next chapter for Gregorski

Long-term employee at The Meadows says her departure is 'leap of faith.'

By SARAH HITE  
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Less than a month after leaving a career she held for 27 1/2 years, Marilyn Gregorski admits she'll be back to The Meadows Nursing Center in Dallas Township.

"They've asked me to help with the Market on the Pond," she said of the center's largest fundraising event.

The 71-year-old doesn't like the word "retirement" and refers to her recent departure from the nursing center as "a leap of faith."

"Ever since my husband passed away 12 years ago, I live by 'sink or swim,'" said Gregorski. "I'm going to start building my new life."

Gregorski left her latest position as director of volunteers on Jan. 1, and she's enjoying her newfound freedom. Sleeping later, enjoying local culture and spending more time with family and friends are priorities now.

"I think of life as a big circle filled with pie pieces; that was just one of my pieces," she said of her former position. "I've got this chance to

smell the roses."

Gregorski has worked for 30 years in the nursing care field, getting her start at the former Maple Hill nursing home in Lehman Township, an all-female facility with just 24 residents, after raising her two children.

"I was in my 40s at the time and I wanted more of a challenge," she said.

She became an activities director after taking classes at the Penn State University Wilkes-Barre campus and found her calling.

"I knew right away, it was the right place for me," she said. "Being with seniors made me so happy. I learned so much. I liked to say I had 24 mothers."

She joined the staff at The Meadows Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Dallas Township in 1983 when it first opened. Over the years, she worked as an activities director, resident and community relations coordinator and volunteer director.

Gregorski was an active part of helping form The Meadows Auxiliary, which provides additional services to residents. When the auxiliary formed a few years after the nursing center opened, Gregorski was amazed by the community's support.

"People just came," she said. "The strength and com-

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Marilyn Gregorski  
Long-term employee at The Meadows

mitment people have to volunteering, and their desire to help, makes our community so unique."

Gregorski enjoyed spending time with residents, but she also admired the hundreds of volunteers who came through The Meadows' doors over the years to help.

"It wasn't work to me," she said of her position. "I had this sense of fulfillment and I knew I was fortunate because not everybody got to work in a position like that."

She said volunteers from all walks of life would perform tasks that met their skills and enjoyment. For example, some would help with paperwork, others would enjoy talking to residents and some would utilize their skills such as playing the piano to share with the residents.

"It's like we're all cogs in a big wheel and we worked together," said Gregorski.

The Meadows saw the de-

velopment of different volunteer programs over the years as well. The teen program formed in 1985 and the pet therapy program started soon after.

"The teens brought a special kind of light to The Meadows," said Gregorski. "Not all the residents had grandchildren, and it was nice for the teens to be bonding with them."

Volunteering is something Gregorski hopes to do as she ventures into a new part of her life as a way to "pay it forward" to all those who helped at The Meadows.

"Somebody out there needs you, and there are so many choices you'll find to give of yourself," said Gregorski.

She said the benefits of volunteering, such as improved health, self-satisfaction and stronger friendships, outweigh the lack of money received from the work.

"Volunteering is giving of the heart," she said.

## Cursive writing alive at Ross ES

By SARAH HITE  
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As schools across the country drop cursive writing from their curriculum, the art of loopy handwriting is alive and well at Ross Elementary in Sweet Valley, though the debate to keep it in the classroom continues.

Eligible students recently participated in a handwriting contest sponsored by Zaner-Bloser, a national purveyor of educational programs and services.

Principal Donald James said Ross Elementary has been involved in the national contest for the last four years, with some students qualifying on the state level in 2009.

"We place emphasis on handwriting," said James. "We make it a big deal. Not a lot of schools place emphasis on it anymore. We think technology and cursive handwriting can co-exist."

Cursive handwriting is not mandated to be taught by the state Department of Education, and many other states are phasing out the writing style over time.

Pennsylvania adopted the Common Core Curriculum initiative in July 2010, and 43 other states have also approved the educational plan. It does not emphasize the teaching of cursive writing to young students, but it does outline standards for the utilization of technology, such as laptops and smart tablets.

At Ross Elementary, students begin learning cursive handwriting in second grade and the style of writing becomes mandatory for all assignments in third and fourth grade. By fifth grade, students are allowed to choose whether they

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Kim Chopyak  
Fifth-grade teacher

want to print or write in cursive in class.

Fifth-grade teacher Kim Chopyak doesn't stress the importance of cursive handwriting, but she finds that some students actually prefer it to printing.

"Some of my kids write beautifully, and some of my kids are going to be doctors and I can't read their writing," she said.

Chopyak said it's especially important for students to choose whatever they're comfortable with for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment tests (PSSAs) because if a writing response is not legible, students get an automatic score of zero.

Sarah Stanski, 10, of Sweet Valley, prefers writing in cursive because she feels it's easier, but thinks most of her fifth-grade peers like to print.

"It's something we've learned since kindergarten," she said of printing.

Evan Judge, 10, of Sweet Valley, is always "in a rush" when he writes in cursive, and his handwriting tends to look a little messy.

"Printing to me is a lot easier," he said.

Despite differing opinions, Chopyak said cursive writing is still an important style to learn because

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Fifth-grader Sarah Stanski, 10, of Sweet Valley practices her cursive writing at Ross Elementary School in Sweet Valley.

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