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'Phantom Valentiner' is revealed



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

After more than 20 years of remaining anonymous, Sue Hand, of Dallas, has admitted to being the Phantom Valentiner who secretly taped hearts like this on doors of Dallas businesses with the help of her family. Hand says her sentiments are still the same.

By SARAH HITE
shite@mydallaspost.com

After more than 20 years, the infamous Valentine Phantom who left giant paper hearts with uplifting messages all over Dallas Borough businesses is ready to be unmasked.

Here's the real surprise - there was more than one phantom.

Sue Hand, lifelong borough resident, business owner and artist, and members of her family - Joe Hand, Sue's husband, Heather Madeira, Sue's daughter, and Tim Madeira, Sue's son-in-law - are responsible for those hearts that adorned storefronts in the early 1990s.

For three years, the Hands and Madeiras plotted their routes and stuck handwritten Valentines that said, "Thank you for serving Dallas - You are loved!" on various businesses through-

out the borough between the hours of 1 and 3 a.m.

Hand said she had to contact Jack Fowler, Dallas Borough police chief at the time, to determine the legality of what they were attempting to do.

"We only put it on business doorways so we wouldn't go on private property," she said. "Though it was private business property, they were open to the public."

Hand got the idea from a magazine article about one of her favorite places - Maine.

"They had an article, just a little thing, on the Valentine Phantom in Portland, Maine," she said. "And every year, Portland, Maine was festooned with pink hearts on Valentines Day and somebody did it overnight."

The first appearance of a Valentine Phantom in Portland,

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CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Gary Steier, of Trucksville, a part-time Dallas High School football coach, airs his concerns about the firing of head coach Ted Jackson at a Dallas School Board work session Monday night.

It's a new era at Dallas

District has new head football coach and tentative new high school schedule.

By EILEEN GODIN
Dallas Post Correspondent

Big changes are in store for the Dallas School District for the 2012-2013 school year, including the appointment of a new head football coach and a tentative new high school schedule.

Long-time Dallas High School football coach Ted Jackson had his career ended Monday night when the school board voted 7-2 to hire Robert Zaruta as the head coach for the 2012-2013 season.

School board members Dr. Bruce Goeringer and Fred Parry sided with parents and students to keep Jackson as head coach. Board members Dr. Richard Coslett, Charles Preece, Maureen Matiska, Catherine Wega, Colleen Slocum, Larry Schuler and Karen Kyle voted to appoint Zaruta.

"This administration is the only check and balances," Goeringer said. "Let the man finish what he started."

Parry said he first voted not to renew Jackson's employment as coach, but after listening to testimony presented at a due proc-

ess hearing and to students, he felt "just cause" for not renewing Jackson's contract was not provided.

"We are making a big mistake," Parry said.

A standing-room only crowd of parents and students filled the meeting room in support of Jackson.

Trucksville resident Jim Wisniewski said he is aware of players who had family issues and Jackson would lend his ear.

"Coach Jackson is a good coach," he said. "I ask you to remove the politics and personal biases when making this decision to retain Coach Jackson."

While several parents and football players took turns at the podium to express concerns and support of Jackson, Superintendent Frank Galicki kept his head down and thumbed through papers in a three-ring binder.

Dallas resident Nick Zapoticky called him out.

"I am listening to people coming up here, who you are supposed to represent. Many of you don't have the decency to pick your head up and watch and listen," he said. "I have a problem with that."

Zapoticky said the opportunity to retain the coach is not

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A celebration for the animals

By SARAH HITE
shite@mydallaspost.com

A Back Mountain resident recently sent plenty of love to the furry friends who live at the SPCA of Luzerne County.

Melissa Berti, of Dallas, celebrated her 40th birthday with a bang, but asked for donations to the local animal shelter instead of gifts to make the celebration extra special.

"I've always loved animals," said Berti. "I've been fundraising for the SPCA for over 20 years."

Guests brought bags of dog food, boxes of cleaning supplies and cards with monetary donations to Berti's birthday bash on Feb. 4 at the Yalick Farms Clubhouse in Dallas Township.

The decked-out pink fete featured feather boas for a \$5 donation and a poster of some of the animals up for adoption at the shelter.

"Personally, this is the first time I've ever seen someone do something like this," said Cary Moran, education and volunteer director at the SPCA of Luzerne County.

Moran was on standby to collect the donated items and tell guests more about the shelter's needs and how the gifts helped.

"This helps tremendously with outreach," said Moran. "It really shows that people care - it means a lot that people care this much."

Moran said there are currently between 75 and 100 animals at the shelter. Despite the economy, she reported the organization was able to keep its head above water last year.

"But when the economy's down, our bills go up, too," she said. "That makes things more imperative."

Local auctioneer Steve Traver, a guest of Berti's, thought the donations were a great idea.

"Melissa's birthdays are always a big deal," he said. "What a great idea. We've got eight or nine cats and



BILL TARUTIS PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Melissa Berti thanks all who donated to the SPCA at her 40th birthday party at Yalick Farms.

"I have a very, very, very large group of friends and they're so generous with their gifts."

Melissa Berti
Dallas

horses - it's what we do."

Berti said she's grateful her friends came out to wholeheartedly support her cause while also having a great time in her honor.

"I have a very, very, very large group of friends and they're so generous with their gifts," she said. "But to tell you the truth, I don't need anything except their friendship. This is a much more worthy cause."

The party wasn't all about the guests' good deeds - a cocktail hour started the "Fierce, Fabulous and 40"-themed gala, which then turned into dinner followed by three hours of what Berti called "booty-shakin'" tunes for the crowd to enjoy.

"I'm thrilled (to be 40)," said Berti. "I'm more excited about this because I've been saving for this party for years, and I get to do this (fundraiser)."



A poster set up in the foyer at the Yalick Farms Clubhouse shows animals available for adoption at the SPCA.



Bartenders Lisa and Rick Baran serve Rita Kopcho, of Dallas, at Melissa Berti's 40th birthday party.

DALLAS TOWNSHIP

Williams Gas will replace part of line

By SARAH HITE
shite@mydallaspost.com

Supervisors told residents Tuesday that the Williams Gas Co. will replace part of the Transco interstate natural gas pipeline this spring.

Township officials received a notice that Williams will replace approximately 1,844 feet of the 24-inch Leidy A pipeline, which runs near and around Hildebrandt Road. The project is located on .42 acres of wetlands.

Supervisor Liz Martin said she is not aware of any other details about the project, but said the supervisors do have questions for the company.

Supervisors do not expect the project to hinder traffic on

Hildebrandt Road. Williams Field Services LLC recently completed its Springville Gathering Line within the township, and the pipeline runs underneath several roads that it crosses.

Township officials also received a notification from the state Department of Environmental Protection about the pipeline project of another company, Chief Gathering LLC. The notification stated Chief is amending its application for the 30-mile Wyoming Natural Gas Pipeline.

Supervisor Bill Grant also said Helen Humphreys, a communications specialist from Williams Field Services LLC, sent the township an e-mail ad-

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