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Seniors forced out of Dallas center

By SARAH HITE
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The Dallas Senior Center closed earlier this month due to safety and visibility concerns, and local seniors are worried another center won't come soon enough.

Trula Hollywood, executive director of the Area Agency on Aging for Luzerne and Wyoming counties, said an issue with flooring posed safety concerns and would have been too expensive to fix.

"We vacated that building because of safety issues," she said. "There were issues with possible

Now seniors are left to attend centers in other communities, including Edwardsville, Kingston and Tunkhannock, until a new senior center can be secured in Dallas.

falling, and cars having difficulty making turns in the parking lot. We wanted to be more visible in the community and have a larger space, as well."

She also said there were moisture problems in the building, which caused the floor to buckle. The flooring was installed in 2009 through a grant, and Luzerne County chose the contractor involved in the project.

The center was a tenant at the 22 Rice St., Dallas location for about 25 years. The building was once the site of the Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction, and the surrounding grounds were used for firemen's bazaars.

Tim Carroll, owner of the building and borough mayor, said the agency must pay for the flooring because its installation was a violation of the lease.

He said he was never notified that there was an issue with the former flooring and was surprised to see new flooring installed in 2009. He said it wasn't installed properly, which caused the linoleum flooring to bubble in areas.

Carroll estimated it would cost about \$4,800 to repair the floor.

Carroll said he also was never told of any other problems within the building. He said other issues that were expressed to him were promptly remedied.

"I got a note from ladies at the center asking to fix the toilet and I

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Dallas residents Joe and Alfreda (Susie) Malak work on a puzzle at the Edwardsville Senior Center. The Malaks now visit the Edwardsville center after the Dallas Senior Center closed due to safety issues.

BACK MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

With gaming funds in hand, group proceeds

By SARAH HITE
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The Back Mountain Community Partnership discussed how to proceed with its emergency management agency center at a meeting March 15 after receiving money from gaming funds.

The partnership applied for a grant to renovate a former medical building on Route 118 in Lehman Township into a regional emergency management agency center.

Dallas Fire & Ambulance Inc. purchased the building in 2010 with the hopes of eventually building a similar center. The project also includes the construction of a pole building on the 9-acre property.

The space will be used for equipment and medical supply storage, partnership and other civic organization meetings, emergency responder training, sleeping quarters for evacuees and a control center for the Back Mountain Regional Emergency Management Agency.

Joe Chacke of NEPA Alliance said the partnership must decide whether its plans to scale back on the project or attempt to secure other funding for the project. The group initially requested \$1.2 million for the project but received \$975,000.

Chacke said the partnership could choose to scale back the facility's plans or find funding elsewhere.

Chairman James Reino Jr. said the partnership has many options, but wanted to discuss the issue with members of Dallas Fire & Ambulance Inc., the building's owner, before making a decision.

The partnership also heard from Roger Heydt of Central Tax/Don Wilkinson Agency, who presented ways officials can research whether an address is located

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within, and paying proper taxes to, a municipality.

He said the passage of Act 32 will help remedy some of those concerns, but public websites allow officials to double-check residents' addresses.

Reino said the municipalities want a workable electronic document to check addresses against the information they find through personal research.

Heydt said it's possible to provide that information, but the method would need to be approved by the Tax Collection Committee.

The partnership also approved a motion to send a letter to local legislators to support state House bills 1329 and 1685 related to changing the prevailing wage laws.

The current prevailing wage law, passed in 1961, requires that workers on government projects exceeding \$25,000 be paid a rate set by the state secretary of labor and industry rather than a number based on local market rates.

House Bill 1329 would set the project rate at \$185,000 to correspond with market inflation. House Bill 1685 would require the secretary of labor and industry to develop a uniform list of worker classifications.

Reino said the current law covers most projects within townships, which can cause financial hardships.

The next Back Mountain Community Partnership meeting will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, April 19 in the Sandy & Marlene Insalaco Hall at Misericordia University, 301 Lake St., Dallas Township.



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Strategizing on how to build an aluminum foil and straw raft are, from left, Tracey, Bob, J.R. and Samantha Redmond, of Dallas.

WORKING TOGETHER

By SARAH HITE
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The crunching sound of metallic foil moving in all directions marked the first-ever Family Science Challenge at Wycallis Elementary on March 8.

Seventy-three families, or 295 people, raced to see who could plan and create a float that could hold the most pennies using aluminum foil and plastic straws in an hour.

Nicole Valkenburg, fourth-grade teacher and elementary science coordinator, found information about the program through the National Science Teachers Association and contacted the founding teacher to see how to get started.

"It was an article about doing something like this with a class, something simple," she said. "I brought it up to the Parent-Teacher Organization president to do this as a family event and I was shocked by the response—20 families wanted to participate by then."

The project was kept a secret until the night of the event, and families chatted nervously in anticipation for the task at hand.

Diane Pocono, of Shavertown, worked with her two daughters

CHALLENGE WINNERS

First place - Nelson Family, 203 pennies
Second place - Motley Family, 131 pennies
Third place - Sutzko Family, 112 pennies

and husband on the simple science project.

"I think this was a great idea—what a turn out," she said of the crowded cafeteria.

She said 9-year-old Shelby raced home with the permission slip in hand and begged her mother to participate.

"I love science and I love creating stuff," said Shelby Pocono.

The Nelson family's float heavily depended on the skills of Marcia, the Nelson boys' grandmother, during the event. She struggled to twist the foil around the straws as young Dominic Nelson Palmatier looked on.

"She cooks at home and uses a lot of aluminum foil, so I thought she would be good at this," joked Marcia Nelson's husband, George. "I expect to win."

And they did. Their float held the most pennies of the night—203.

Leigh McGlynn, of Shavertown, took her son Casey to the



Greg and Diane Pocono, right, of Shavertown, assist their daughters Cara, 7, and Shelby, 9, in building a raft made of aluminum foil and straws at the Wycallis Elementary Family Science Challenge Night.

"She cooks at home and uses a lot of aluminum foil, so I thought she would be good at this. I expect to win."

George Nelson
Family Science Challenge competitor

science challenge not expecting to win, but to spend more time together.

"We don't get to do things like this too often," said McGlynn. "It's nice to have new activities and to have fun."

The Redmond family quickly got to work once the instructions were revealed. Bob Redmond toyed with the straws as his children, Samantha and R.J., drew up plans for their float.

"It's about buoyancy and weight distribution, but I won't say anything else," said Bob Redmond as he kept his plans secret.

Tracie Redmond, the matriarch of the family, was the brains of the

operation while her husband was the brawn.

"My husband loves this—he loves any type of challenge," she said.

Wycallis principal Dr. Paul Reinert walked around the cafeteria, observing families' projects.

"This helps the parents understand what engaging learning is all about," he said. "This is a great use of the community building and kids get to spend time with their parents. It's great stuff."

Valkenburg hopes it will become an annual event.

"In this bad economy, it's nice to have free things like this to do," she said.



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