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Daddy's little girl is Olympic bound

DHS grad Paige Selenski is member of U.S. field hockey team

By SARAH HITE
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Friends and family of 22-year-old Paige Selenski weren't exactly surprised when the 2008 Dallas High School graduate was recently named to the U.S. Olympic Field Hockey Team.

"Well, yes and no," said Paige's father Brian Selenski, of Shavertown. "You know from the coaches what's going on and who's doing well but then you're holding your breath because you never know."

For Selenski, a University of Virginia senior majoring in En-

glish, making the team was a long time coming.

Brian Selenski said his daughter was first introduced to the sport as a seventh-grader at Dallas Middle School by her late mother Judy's suggestion to join a field hockey camp.

And the rest is the stuff of Olympians.

Selenski joined the junior high team at Dallas and earned a starting spot on the varsity team by her freshman year.

Former coach Mary Kate Stauffer said it's evident that Selenski has no one but herself to credit for her success.

"Paige was and continues to

"Sometimes I think it's a dream. I mean, what are the chances that your son or daughter is going to play at the Olympics?"

Brian Selenski
Father of Olympian Paige Selenski

be head and shoulders above the rest of her peers in terms of her skills," said Stauffer, who coached all four years of Selenski's high school career. "From an early age, she knew how to harness her talents and definitely worked hard."

It was during that time when Selenski lost her mother to can-

cer, and Brian Selenski wanted to make sure his daughter continued on her athletic path as long as she enjoyed the game.

"I asked her if she wanted to continue and she said 'yes,'" Brian said. "My wife was there right down to the end. When she

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BILL TARUTIS/FOR THE DALLAS POST
Brian Selenski holds a portrait of his daughter Paige, a member of the U.S. field hockey team and 2008 graduate of Dallas High School, at his home in Shavertown.



BILL TARUTIS/FOR THE DALLAS POST
Auctioneers Andrew Santora, right, and Calvin Crane take bids on Chicken Run merchandise at the Back Mountain Memorial Library Children's Auction.

Youngsters enjoy auction experience

By SARAH HITE
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Eli Chapel was waiting for "something good" to pass over the block at the Back Mountain Memorial Library Children's Auction on July 7.

Prices stayed pretty low, but a multiple-cartridge Super Soaker-type pumping water gun caught Chapel's eye.

And though he didn't have much money to work with, Chapel knew his father would help him if he really needed the extra cash.

Despite having only \$18 to spend, Chapel raised his hand high until the gun's price soared past \$26. That's when he reluctantly gave up the bidding war.

"I like it because it could hold a lot of water," said Chapel, 10, of Dallas. "But (the price is) too high."

Attending the children's auction is a tradition in the Chapel family - the clan has been flocking to the block for years.

"(Eli's father, Mark) has been coming to the auction since he was old enough to walk," said Mark's mother, Mary Chapel.

Mark Chapel wants his son to be part of the event he's known since he was a little boy.

"It's given him a chance to live the auction experience," he said.

The children's auction is chaired by Ron and Judy Santora. Ron is Scout Leader of Boy Scout Troop 281 of Dallas, and the Scouts help run the event during its four-hour slot.

The Santoras' son, Andrew, gets to practice his auctioneering skills during the event, which led to his first nighttime chanting experience one

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year. "Our son Andrew was in sixth grade when we first got involved," said Judy. "He loves it - the auctioneers have been so welcoming."

The Santoras store the thousands of items up for bid, from playground equipment to dolls to brand-new bikes, at their home before the auction.

Judy said most of the items get sold somehow, whether it's at the auction or in tents during the evening activities.

"Some goes into our attic for next year, but we hope that doesn't happen," she said, laughing.

Two plastic bags filled with Bratz dolls won't be placed in the Santoras' attic this year.

The auction spoils sat in the lap of 6-year-old Sarah Burd, of Centerville, after her mother easily won the dolls by offering the only bid.

"I just started, and they had four items and I bid on three," said Kathy Burd.

She said the prices are too good not to bid on the items for Sarah and 8-year-old Steven. They sat in the front row before the block as Mom stood, waving her hand for My Little Pony memorabilia.

"I do it for my kids," she said.

Kathy Burd's friend, Molly Matosky, of Monroe Town-

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Fate is grim for area's feral cats

By SARAH HITE
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The Back Mountain may be a small part of a bigger problem when it comes to animal overpopulation, but animal welfare experts say everyone can help when it comes to preventing the grim fate that awaits these animals.

Officials said the most pressing issue is controlling the feral cat population, which can be hindered by ensuring one's pets are spayed and neutered.

In 2011, all stray cats that came through the Luzerne County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)'s doors from Jackson, Lake, Lehman and Ross townships were euthanized.

Those 30 cats, most likely feral, were put down because they were ill or a potential danger to people.

Luzerne County SPCA Director of Development Peggy Nork said two adult feral cats, descendants of domesticated cats that have returned to the wild, can produce about 12,000 offspring in five years.

"That being said, it doesn't take long for that neighbor's house, who's feeding two stray cats, to become the nuisance house in the neighborhood where everybody is upset with the amount of cats that are there, the smell of feces or urine. It happens very quickly," she said.

Nork said those wild animals are more prone to illness and may be too aggressive to be adopted, though the SPCA holds an animal for 48 hours before deciding whether to put it up for adoption or have it euthanized.

Because the animals are typically not spayed or neutered, one stray cat can quickly turn into a pack of wild animals on one's doorstep.

"A lot of these municipalities don't have animal enforcement officers, and because they don't, we are receiving those animals from just the residents in the community, therefore (municipalities) don't know how many animals we're bringing in from their community," said Nork.

Nork is trying to meet with municipal leaders to discuss these numbers and promote ways to educate communities about the costs of taking in animals as well as ways to prevent overpopulation.

"(Municipal leaders) need to educate their community not to feed stray cats," she said. "If a stray cat is in your neighborhood, the best thing for you to do for that cat is bring it to the SPCA. If it's a social cat or can be

THE FATE OF BACK MOUNTAIN STRAYS IN 2011



Source: Luzerne County SPCA

Mark Guydish/The Times Leader

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Luzerne County SPCA, call 825-4111 or visit www.spcaluzernecounty.org. For more information about Blue Chip Animal Refuge, call 333-5265 or visit www.bcfaanimalrefuge.org.

socialized, we'll get it adopted."

She said residents in communities may want to feed stray cats in an attempt to help, but that action usually does more harm than good.

"The alternative of it living and fending for itself is not good," Nork said of wild animals. "(The cat) will eventually get diseases and will affect any other cat that's let out so if you have an indoor cat that you let out occasionally, your cat is susceptible to getting these diseases that cats transmit."

Kingston Township Manager Kathleen Sebastian said stray cats are always a problem in the township, and education is the only way to solve it.

"I did hours of research to see if we could draw up an ordinance to control this, but there are no state or federal regulations on feral cats," said Sebastian.

Under an animal ordinance in Kingston Township, property owners are limited to five dogs in one household. Sebastian said feral cats are not included because the township cannot prove ownership of those animals.

"People just say, 'That's not my cat,'" she said. Sebastian said one homeown-

er on Spring Street in Shavertown had nearly 60 cats due to feeding strays.

"We try to tell residents that it makes their lives worse," Sebastian said of the cats. "When a resident feeds them, they can't hunt for themselves."

Taking in feral cats can even be a problem for no-kill animal shelters like Blue Chip Farms Animal Refuge in Orange.

Marge Bart, founder of the nonprofit shelter, said the refuge is overrun by stray cats, but more kittens keep showing up on its doorstep.

Bart said feral cats are a problem because the 150 "civil, friendly" cats being housed at the shelter can't even find homes.

"First, we take them to the vet to see if they have feline leukemia or any other illness," said Bart. "If they do, we destroy them because they can't recover from that."

All animals that pass through Blue Chip's doors are spayed and neutered, no matter what, said Bart.

If the cat is healthy, shelter volunteers will attempt to rehabilitate the animal, but feral cats are usually given to farmers to

keep rodent populations in check.

"That's all we can do, really," she said.

The most important lesson animal welfare experts want to stress is ensuring all pets are spayed and neutered. Not only does the action help control the overpopulation of animals in a community but, according to Nork, it keeps animals healthier longer.

"It makes them more of a content animal," she said. "If you have a male or female cat at home and it's not spayed or neutered, the male cat will start to spray in the home, the female cat will go into heat, attracting other cats in the neighborhood. It's just healthier for them altogether."

The Luzerne County SPCA offers a spay and neuter assist program for low-income families. Nork said the numbers of strays has declined since the beginning of this and other similar programs.

"Cat numbers are definitely coming down in our community but not nearly as much as they should," she said.

