

DALLAS TOWNSHIP

# Residents respond to gas release incident

**SUSAN DENNEY**  
Dallas Post Correspondent

Supervisor Liz Martin led a discussion on the recent gas release near Dallas schools at the supervisors' work meeting on Oct. 1.

She told the assembled residents that the township was not contacted in advance. "We were not notified," she said of the incident. "Nobody left a number or a name."

The gas was released by Williams Companies Inc., owners of the Transco pipeline which runs through the township.

Emergency Management Coordinator Alan Pugh also said that he had not received notification from

The Williams Companies Inc. until "three minutes after the gas was released."

The company said it had not notified him earlier because their schedule had accelerated.

Pugh pointed out that gas companies are only required to contact the county when work is being done on gas lines. They contact other groups as a courtesy.

He explained that the public was never in danger during the release since methane floats up. Emergency responders with meters proved quickly that there was no gas at ground level.

But the strong smell of the natural gas odorant mercaptan stayed at

ground level and created panic among students. Many parents went to school district buildings to pick up their children.

According to Pugh, the gas smell outside led school officials to shut down the air conditioning system and to put students in the auditorium. He admitted that a natural impulse is to go outside when gas is smelled, but the threat was external and the school district acted properly.

Pugh also said that Williams agreed to move its next purge of the gas line to a time when school would not be in session. The company was scheduled to purge lines at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 2. During citizen com-

ments, resident Jane Tolomello expressed anger over the situation. Tolomello lives near the gas gathering line and was not notified by Williams. "I shouldn't have to call Liz (Martin) and Alan (Pugh)." She was also distressed by the events at the school. "I've counted on an evacuation plan," she said.

Martin replied, "We can only ask the gas company to notify us."

Gas Drilling Awareness Coalition member Mary Rodriguez said, "I don't think anyone should be placing blame." She added, "There was panic up at the school."

Rodriguez said the situation showed the need for an improved emergency

plan. She added that the incident was "a godsend, a little test" which showed that the emergency plan at the school needs to be better.

Several residents mentioned the fact that some of the children were outside with their math teachers. They felt that emergency procedures were not adequate.

Police Chief Robert Jolley said that parents who picked up children at the schools did not help the situation. He pointed out that the mercaptan smell was outside and that every time the door was opened to let out a child, the threat was let inside.

Martin responded to this by saying, "Had the district

known that this was going on, the amount of parents would have been substantially less."

Dawn Giacometti said her parents, residents of Dallas Township, live on the pipeline and were not notified of any work by Williams. "They didn't get a letter," she said.

Martin said that Williams is working on getting a better list of those who should be notified by letter.

After the meeting, Martin told The Times Leader that the incident had a plus side. "Many debriefings and many hours were spent with the township, Williams, Transco, and the school district," she said, "and I believe now we understand

each other better and we can move forward."

*In other business...*

Supervisors discussed the possibility of a joint grant with Dallas School District to hire a school resource officer. Jolley estimated that the township would have the use of the resource office about 25 percent of the time. Supervisors will advertise a public meeting with representatives of the Dallas School District to discuss the matter.

Supervisors announced that there will be a public hearing at 6 p.m. on Oct. 15 before the regular supervisors' meeting to gather comments on changing the township's SALDO amendment.

BACK MOUNTAIN BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: BACK MOUNTAIN VETERINARY HOSPITAL

## Moving forward with technology and care

**ELIZABETH BAUMEISTER**  
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Back Mountain Veterinary Hospital, 105 West Center Hill Road, Dallas, accumulated decades of growth and experience since it opened in the early 1960s but, according to the current owner and staff members, the business is not about to start maintaining status quo. Always learning new things, implementing new technologies and building relationships with new clients, the business is far from static.

That's one reason Dr. Brock Phillips, owner and chief veterinarian, enjoys his career, which, although it began over 25 years ago, is just getting started. He said it may be easy to become bored at some jobs, but not this one.

"New technology really keeps you on your toes," Phillips said, adding the nature of medicine is always moving forward. For example, the practice is almost entirely paperless and even x-rays, ultrasounds, echocardiograms and both still and motion pictures can be quickly transferred to specialists via e-mail and other electronic means.

He also appreciates the diversity of the practice.

"In this business," he said, "it's almost like a pawn shop—you never know what's going to walk in the doors...there's an incredible variety."

Likewise, the business offers a vast variety of services, including ultrasound and echocardiograms, specialty surgery, advanced diagnostics, laser surgery, cold laser therapy, care of exotic and "pocket" pets, spaying and neutering, vaccinations, laboratory testing, pharmacy (its on-line pharmacy currently offers 872 products), allergy testing, electrocardiograms (EKG), digital radiography, geriatric medicine, glaucoma screening, dental care, microchip implantation and blood pressure monitoring.

"Basically, we're a day practice," Phillips said, "but we do offer advanced diagnostics and

surgery." Phillips purchased the business in 1992 from his uncle, Richard C. Post, VMD, who first introduced him to the practice of medicine and provided inspiration to follow in his footsteps.

"He just enjoyed what he did," Phillips said.

One aspect of the business which makes it unique today is its number of employees - 20, including Phillips and office personnel - and the fact that each brings his or her own skill sets and interests to the mix.

"The nice thing about having multiple people here," said Joy Mueller, hospital administrator, "is each has their own niche."

Phillips agreed, adding the staff members make successful attempts to be a team and seek input from each other.

"You never know what you may learn from someone else," he said.

One of those team members is Dr. Devinne Bennett, associate veterinarian, who offers her knowledge of and interest in avian, "exotic" and "pocket" pets.

According to the business' website, backmountainvet.com, Bennett "is a Category II USDA Certified Veterinarian, who also holds a certificate of Veterinary Dentistry Education from the University of Illinois. Besides her interest in exotics and birds, Dr. Bennett leans towards Clinical Nutrition, Small Animal and Equine Internal Medicine, and Theriogenology."

Another is Dr. Andrew Hardisky, associate veterinarian, who, according to the website, "is an active member of the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association. Dr. Hardisky has a background in Emergency Medicine/Critical Care and holds a special interest in Endocrine Disease."

Dr. Kelly Brooks, associate veterinarian, brings "a fresh perspective and a lot of energy" to the team, according to the website.

"Dr. Brooks is an active mem-



Comprising the team of veterinarians at the Back Mountain Veterinary Hospital are, from left, Dr. Devinne Bennett, associate veterinarian; Dr. Brock Phillips, owner and chief veterinarian; Dr. Andrew Hardisky, Associate Veterinarian; and Dr. Kelly Brooks, Associate Veterinarian.

ber of the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association. She has a great love for Cardiology and a special interest in Internal Medicine. These interests make her very pleased to be a part of a facility with a long-standing history as a Referral Center for Advanced Diagnostics, offering Echocardiograms and Ultrasounds with consults from Cardiology and Internal Medicine Specialists."

Although each member contributes something to the team, Phillips said one thing they all have in common is a sincere con-

cern for the animals, something not easily faked.

"The reviews we get are exceptionally positive," he said, "and I think it's because of a genuine feeling of care on the part of the staff."

Back Mountain Veterinary Hospital is open 7 days a week, with evening hours Monday through Friday and urgent care available Sundays. Financing is offered through Care Credit and iCare Financing.

The Sunday Urgent Care option began this past April as an alternative to the Emergency Clinic for problems that are not considered true emergencies.

### MEET THE VETERINARIAN

**Dr. Brock Phillips**  
**Residence:** Shavertown  
**Pets:** He has had both cats and dogs as pets for most of his life and currently has a cat.  
**Hobbies/interests:** He enjoys biking and skiing. He has a great love of music and attended school for music prior to pursuing a career in veterinary medicine.  
**Childhood dream job:** When he was a kid, he always dreamed of being just like Jacques Cousteau—exploring the deep seas.  
**Favorite animal:** It's a tie between dogs and dolphins.  
**Dream vacation:** Bora Bora.

## Bus 'stuffed' at Misericordia

The bus got "stuffed" with donated food, clothes and school supplies for children at Misericordia University on Sept. 26. The university's Staff Council conducts the annual event. The items will be delivered to the McGlynn and Mineral Springs educational centers in Wilkes-Barre and to the Noxen Tutoring Program at the Lake-Noxen Elementary School.



Left: Emma Mulhern, a housekeeper at Misericordia University, donates diapers to the Stuff the Bus campaign on campus. Below: Vanessa Botzman, of Dallas, contributes a few items to the Stuff the Bus campaign at Misericordia University. Far below: Staff and community members stand in line to Stuff the Bus with contributions for local charities.

CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK | FOR THE DALLAS POST



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