

# The DALLAS POST

50¢

WILKES-BARRE, PA.

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AN EDITION OF THE TIMES LEADER

## TALKING TO THE BIG GUY



Brothers Issac, (left) and Hudson Ruger (right), Dallas, explain to Santa what they want for Christmas at the Franklin Township Annual Christmas party hosted by the Franklin Township Vol. Fire Department.

Santa was a big hit at the Franklin Township Annual Christmas Party hosted by the Franklin Township Volunteer Fire Department on Dec. 16 at the fire hall. Here, brothers Issac, left, and Hudson Ruger, of Dallas, tell the big guy what they want for Christmas. For additional photos of the party, please turn to page \_\_\_\_.

## Activities abound at former GOH school

### Building now owned by church available to public

SARAH HITE  
Dallas Post Correspondent

The former site of Gate of Heaven School is still abuzz with activity almost every night of the week, and officials want the public to know the building is available to the Back Mountain community.

Renamed the John Paul II Center, the more than 5,000 square foot gymnasium and classroom space in the former elementary school hosts events such as sports team practices, birthday parties and awards banquets.

Renee Boland, property manager for the church, said once the Diocese of Scranton closed Gate of Heaven School in 2011, the church became financially responsible for the building.

Previously, the church only paid a small portion of the building's utilities, as the church and the school were separate entities and had separate budgets, she said.

"When the Diocese made the decision to close the school, the church became owner of everything," said Boland.

Now the church is renting out the space to help out with finances and keep the building in use. Groups like local youth sports programs and Boy and Girl Scout troops have been using the space since 2011. Birthday parties, baby showers and bridal showers have also been hosted there.

"We're not looking to get rich," said Boland.



Gate of Heaven School in Dallas.



Volunteers serve food at the kitchen of the Gate of Heaven School gymnasium.

"We are just hoping to cover some of our costs. The school is used by other parishes in the area as well. St. Therese's Church in Shavertown uses the building three times a week for CCD classes. The Back Mountain Senior High Youth Group, which includes teens from any parish in the Back Mountain, has a meeting space near the gym to hold events. "There was a lot of

emotional hurt in the community when the school closed," said Boland. "Everyone in the Back Mountain has either gone to Gate of Heaven or knows someone who did. Now we have a new place - a new institution mainly dedicated to religious education."

The middle school building is being repurposed into a parish center for Gate of Heaven. Bible study, Sunday school and other church events are



The 'Catholic Underground' at Gate of Heaven School.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about renting space at the John Paul II Center, contact Renee Boland at 570-675-2121.

hosted there, but Boland said the space is also available for public use upon request.

"We never really had our own space," said Boland. "We always had to ask the school if we could use their classrooms for meetings."

There is also a music room in the middle school used by the Back Mountain Youth Group's rock band called Relentless, and as a practice space for the local singing group Changing Habits.

"We think it's a good thing," said Boland. "It's working and we're happy to help people. It helps us, too. Why let the building just sit and be empty?"

The gym features a stage, basketball hoops, a scoreboard and a fully functional kitchen. Boland said one sports league's awards banquet hosted about 300 people with plenty of room to spare.

"We are even thinking about making improvements, but that will take some time," said Boland.

## Five decades of service

### Back Mountain Police Association celebrates 55th year of existence

SUSAN DENNEY  
Dallas Post Correspondent

The Back Mountain Police Association celebrated its 55th anniversary this month and its 95 members continue to benefit the community they serve.

The association is made up of local police officers, Pennsylvania game commissioners, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat commissioners and state police officers. The dividing point for the organization is the Susquehanna River so members hail from communities between the Municipality of Kingston to Harveys Lake.

The group plans a 55th anniversary celebration in February at the Apple Tree Terrace at Newbery Estates in Dallas.

According to David Dembowski, public relations representative of the BMPA, the group provides service projects as well as encourages camaraderie among the officers. "The focus is to give back more to the community," he said.

Kingston Township sergeant Michael Moravec has been a member since the 1980s, has been president and treasurer of the organization and now serves on the executive board. Moravec said the organization changes its focus depending on members' needs. "The emphasis over the years has gone to the training aspect."

The group helps members fulfill their responsibilities. Moravec said one of the challenges today is that many members are looking for full-time work. "Municipalities can't afford to hire full-time officers."

Deputy Ross Piazza of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission also serves on the board and said the group has a social aspect as well.

"They're going to deal

Those interested in joining the Back Mountain Police Association can check on the group's website at [www.backmtpolice.org](http://www.backmtpolice.org) for membership information.

together professionally. You go out to eat after meetings. You get to be friends with them," he said of group members.

The group sponsors a number of service projects each year.

For Piazza, one of the most important events in the BMPA year is the Kids' Fish Day, an event that draws between 120 and 140 children to Frances Slocum State Park for a variety of activities.

He said the event had multiple purposes, one being "to give kids the opportunity to be involved with uniformed officers. They don't have to be afraid."

But he said the event also promotes fishing. "Fishing itself is a family recreation that's cheap," he said.

"It doesn't take a lot of skill," Moravec added.

Piazza explained that the group gives out many prizes, including poles, lures and tackle boxes to encourage fishing. The activity also encourages young fishers to bring their grandparents.

The group encourages multi-generation activities. "The grandparents are the ones who have the time to take them fishing," Piazza said.

President Martin Maransky of the Kingston Township Police Department said present officers are ending their term of office. "We're ending our sixth year," he said.

Maransky cited the installation of security benches as a project he felt good about. Some magistrate's offices don't have a police station attached with a holding cell. The security

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Pennsylvania game commissioners, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat commissioners and state police officers. The dividing point for the organization is the Susquehanna River so members hail from communities between the Municipality of Kingston to Harveys Lake.



Members of the Back Mountain Police Association Executive Board which is comprised of officers and the Board of Governors are, from left, first row, Kingston Township Police Officer Jonathan Chipego, treasurer; Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Ranger Darren Kramer, secretary; Kingston Township Police Officer Martin C. Maransky, president; Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officer Ross Piazza, vice-president; Dallas Borough Police Officer William Acuff, Board of Governors. Second row, Kingston Township Police Sergeant Michael A. Moravec, Board of Governors; Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Conservation Officer James Jolley, Board of Governors; Attorney Daniel Pillets, Esquire, solicitor; Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Conservation Officer Gerald Kapral, Board of Governors; Kingston Township Police Officer Michael Huntzinger, membership secretary. Absent at the time of the photo was Retired Dallas Borough Police Chief Jack Fowler, Board of Governors.

