



Retirees

Lee Gregory
Patty Ondash
Roberta Phillips
John Cox

Loss Prevention
Purchasing
Recorder of Deeds
Correctional Facility

Deceased Employees

John Ostovic
James Kalakewich

Building & Grounds
Jail Security

Our condolences to all the families of these past employees.

Resignations

Gregory Parker
Deborah Jones
Jamie Mesar
Krista Humphreys
Vicki Stone
Ryan Hoffman
Jared Johnson
Daniel Barnhart
Barbara Linkish
Danielle D. Long
Deborah Rockwell

Aging
CYS
CYS
Domestic Relations
Jail Security
Sheriff's Office
Sheriff's Office
Tax Revenue
WCHC
WCHC
WCHC

Crime Victim-Witness Assistance Program

Office of the District Attorney

Crime can strike anyone, anywhere. Victims can be anyone of any age, economic status, profession or occupation. It is important that you think safety and incorporate this into your lifestyle. Be suspicious – too much faith in human nature can make you an easy target for a criminal.

Thanks to the local police departments and the Area on Aging for their help in making Personal Safety a goal.

SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

Strangers At The Door

Keep your doors locked and windows secure at all times.

Place a peephole in the door so you can look out and see who is on the other side.

County Personnel Changes...

New Employees

Cara Lytton
Suzanne Morgan
Angie Deal
Kellee Finnegan
Daisha Bobola
Constance Dezardo
Kristina John
Jessica Dott
Anthony Feriozzi
Rachelle Groves
Debra Gregg
Charlene Scherich
Merry Ann Hainer
James Wood II
Brian Mechling
Raffaele Casale
Marisa Henrickson
Ernestina Clark
Tara Husser

Aging
CCIS
Controller's Office
CYS
Domestic Relations
Housekeeping
Jail Security
Juvenile Probation
Juvenile Probation
MH/MR
Prothonotary's Office
Prothonotary's Office
Recorder of Deeds
Records Management
Sheriff's Office
Tax Revenue
WCHC
WCHC
WCHC

County Newsletter Staff ...

A sincere "Thank You" to all who helped pull this issue together.

Do you like to write or take photos? Any employee is welcome to join the volunteer newsletter staff. Contact Sandy Sabot at x-6031 in the CCIS office for more information.

Do not open the door to anyone you do not know without some kind of verification of identification. If you are not satisfied with the identification – do not open the door.

If a stranger comes to the door asking you to make a telephone call, do not open the door. Offer to make the call for them.

Do not let anyone who comes to your door know that you are alone in the residence.

You do not have to participate in surveys-that is your choice.

If a stranger comes to your door and refuses to leave, advise them that you will call the police. Do not panic or argue, but be firm and state your intent confidently.

At night, surround your house with adequate lighting. (sensor lights, floodlights, etc.)

Until next time, play it safe.



Washington County Highlights...



Vol. I Issue 4

January/February 2005

Profile on our New President Judge: Debbie O'Dell Seneca

By Scott H. Fergus

The County Court of Common Pleas has a new President Judge. The Honorable Debbie O'Dell Seneca was appointed to that position by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court upon the death of Judge David L. Gilmore. The President Judge is a life-long resident of Washington County, having been born in New Eagle, Pa. She is a graduate of Bentworth High School and a Magna Cum Laude graduate in political science from West Virginia University. She obtained her law degree from Duquesne University School of Law, where her son Mario is now a student.

President Judge O'Dell Seneca enjoyed a successful and varied private law practice before ascending to the Bench. She was a civil litigator, but gained familiarity with the criminal side of the Court while serving as an assistant Public Defender and as Chief of Litigation for the District Attorney's Office. In addition she served as law clerk to now Senior Judge John F. Bell. The President Judge took these unique experiences, along with her experiences as city councilwoman for the City of Washington, to the bench when

she was elected in 1991.

Since her election (and subsequent overwhelming retention reelection) she has been very active in judicial affairs. She was appointed by the Supreme Court as a Judge to the Pennsylvania Court of Judicial Discipline in 2001 and now serves as President Judge of that judicial body. She also serves as Zone 6 representative to the Pennsylvania State Trial Judges Conference. Active in her church and its choir, she also

volunteers her time as Moderator of the Permanent Judicial Commission for the Synod of the Trinity, Presbyterian Church USA, having been elected in 2004.

The President Judge has been a work horse for the Court. She has experience in all phases of litigation, having at various times presided over criminal, civil, equity, divorce, custody, domestic relations, summary appeals, juvenile court and Orphans' Court. She presently is presiding over civil litigation, tax assessment appeals, and Orphans' Court, together with all of the additional duties of administration of the 27th Judicial District.

President Judge O'Dell Seneca hit the ground running in her present position. The need of the County for an additional Judge was documented by the sixth judge legislation and the Court lost one of its most active civil law judges with the untimely death of Judge Gilmore. The President Judge didn't miss a beat. She has been moving cases forward at the same time she has had to assume all of the administrative duties of the Court. This includes all of the budgetary and personnel decisions for the court and all court-related offices. And she has been doing it with an eye toward saving tax-payers' money! It is a tribute that despite being short-handed, our bench has kept up with its workload and has not allowed a backlog to develop.

With all the work President Judge O'Dell Seneca is facing, it's amazing she has time to pursue her hobbies of reading, Washington Arts Chorus, Washington Community Theater and travel. Don't be surprised if you go to one of the local musical theater productions to see the President Judge singing and dancing on the boards. She will be teaching a Continuing Legal Education course in Rome, Italy this summer in conjunction with Duquesne Law School. Also, you may run into her at the gym pumping iron or at a sporting event where her law school student son Mario is furthering his dream to become a major league baseball umpire! Congratulations President Judge O'Dell Seneca.



HONORING JUDGE DAVID L. GILMORE

By Scott H. Fergus

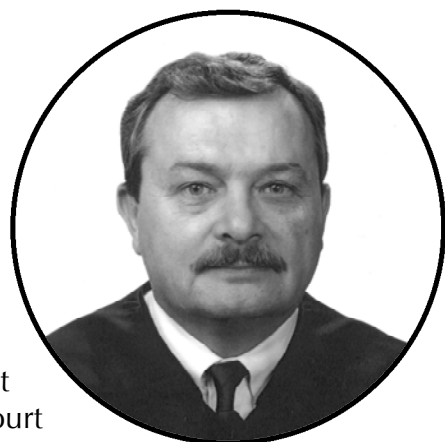
The County lost one of its most prominent citizens when Judge David L. Gilmore suffered a fatal stroke on September 29, 2004. At the time of his death Judge Gilmore was serving his third term on the bench of the Court of Common Pleas where he served as President Judge.

David L. Gilmore was born October 28, 1944 in Washington, Pa. He lived his entire life in Washington County and he was a success in all his endeavors. A graduate of Trinity High School, he was a student government leader and outstanding wrestler. He continued his education at California University of Pennsylvania where he continued to be a leader in student government. He was recently recognized by his alma mater as being one of California's outstanding graduates. In 1970 he obtained his Juris Doctor at Duquesne University School of Law where he served on the Law Review.

David began his private law practice in Washington with two esteemed members of the bar, Howard Goldfarb and Frank Conte. It wasn't long, however, until David decided that he wanted to pursue a career in public service.

Judge Gilmore's career was to be closely linked to Washington County. From 1971 to 1972 he was an assistant District Attorney in Jess Costa's office. He was appointed assistant County Solicitor in 1973 and named County Solicitor in 1975. In 1976 he was named by the Court to serve the unexpired term of County Commissioner and long time mentor Mike Flynn. In 1979 Dave ran a successful campaign and along with Frank Mascara was elected to a full term on the Board of Commissioners.

David was County Commissioner at a time when County government was exploding. He was instrumental in the construction of the Court House Square and the consolidation of the County offices into that building. He also was one of the founding fathers of the project at Southpointe, which was to become one of the premier economic developments in the State.



In 1983 David left the administrative side of government when he was first elected to the Court of Common Pleas. During Judge Gilmore's time on the Court there was a tremendous growth of litigation. One of the last things he did prior to his death was to work closely with State Senator Barry Stout in proposing the successful legislation that created a sixth Judge for Washington County. During Dave's tenure on the Bench he was known for being one of the top Civil Judges in the state.

David was a loving family man. He was married to the former Janice Kughn and they had two children of whom he was very proud. Missy, a successful lawyer in Pittsburgh is married to Andy Szefi. T.J. is a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy and presently an instructor of NROTC at Texas A&M University. He and his wife Amy gave birth to the Gilmore's first grandchild in November of this year.

Judge Gilmore was a man for all seasons. He was a world traveler, most recently visiting T.J. and Amy in T.J.'s various ports of call, including Japan and Italy. He was a gourmet cook and regularly prepared dinner for Janice. He was famous for planning and cooking New Year's Eve dinner every year for a group of his friends. In later life he developed a love for golf, and as with everything else he tried, as much as anyone can, he was mastering that game.

Although those who came before him in court might disagree, Judge Gilmore was a gentleman. He would look over those glasses of his and put the full fear of the justice system in a deadbeat dad, but at the end of the day those who knew him know that he was kind and compassionate.

There are very few County employees whose lives were not touched by Judge Gilmore. His career was a unique mix of service to both the Administrative and Judicial branches of County government. The citizens of Washington County have lost a true public servant.

Veterans Leadership Program is Offering a \$2,500 Scholarship Award

By Deana DeRosa

Do you know anyone graduating in the class of 2005 who is a descendant of a veteran (parent, grandparent or guardian)? If he or she is from Washington, Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Cambria, Greene, Fayette or Westmoreland County, he or she may be eligible for a \$2500 scholarship through the Veterans Leadership Program (VLP).

Plans are currently underway to build a memorial dedicated to WW II veterans on the North Shore.



The VLP is seeking a graduating senior from the Class of 2005 to give an inspirational speech at the memorial's dedication on May 12, 2005 in Pittsburgh. The speech must be a fully developed 500-word speech, considering the contributions and sacrifices made by the veterans and their families. Additional criteria are required such as relative's proof of military service, etc.

For complete information on the scholarship contest, please call the Veterans Affairs office at 724-228-6865. Deadline for submission of essay/speech copy is Friday, March 4, 2005. Complete contest entries need to be sent to:

VLP, 1323 Forbes Ave., Suite 202,
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

or as an attachment to e-mail to
schumacherm@vlpwpa.org



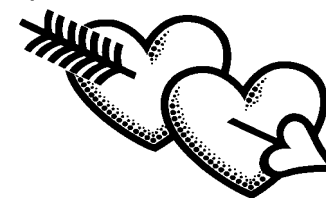
OPEN UP YOUR HEART This VALENTINE'S DAY



By Harry Wilson, Veterans Affairs Director

The Valentines for Veterans program will be held again this year in conjunction with the 31st National Salute to Veterans. The Washington County Veterans' Affairs office is asking county residents to remember those veterans by making or buying valentines for the veterans.

Individuals and groups are encouraged to participate to show their support of those veterans who sacrificed for our freedom in the past. The valentines will be taken to area veterans' hospitals in time for Valentine's Day distribution.



To participate, drop off your valentines for vets

on or before Friday, February 11 to Room 703, Courthouse Square.

For more information on how you can help, anytime - call 724-228-6865.

E	G	Y	G	N	I	R	P	S	R	P	R	J
L	U	D	I	P	U	C	J	E	V	O	L	O
P	H	N	E	W	P	N	D	B	M	E	A	B
U	M	A	R	R	I	A	G	E	G	T	M	R
O	S	C	H	O	V	O	N	L	R	I	G	
C	H	S	S	I	K	M	I	I	Y	D	N	
T	E	I	L	U	J	R	A	T	S	T	E	I
S	A	K	E	Y	I	S	U	N	E	V	A	D
S	R	E	W	O	L	F	H	E	C	E	R	D
M	T	O	R	B	D	E	W	L	T	E	P	E
A	N	N	I	V	E	R	S	A	R	Y	W	W
D	N	O	M	A	I	D	K	V	O	W	S	K

FIND THESE VALENTINE'S DAY WORDS
by Bracken Burns

Wed	Romance	Juliet	Spring
Hug	Dating	Roses	
Kiss	Love	Boy	
Anniversary	Valentine	Girl	
Cupid	Poetry	Diamond	
Eros	Marriage	Ring	
Heart	Couple	Wedding	
Flowers	Vows	Venus	
Candy	Romeo	Red	

It's Sugarin' Time

By Jeff Donahue

As late February turns to early March, the first signs of spring appear in Washington County. Pungent skunk cabbage can be found blooming in wet areas, bright yellow coltsfoot can be seen flowering along roadsides, and pink and white spring beauties will be carpeting the forest floors. Looking toward the sky, turkey vultures can be seen migrating back north from their southern wintering grounds, while red-tailed hawks can be observed in circling courtship flights, passing sticks and food between mates.

The thawing ground, warmer temperatures and longer days of late winter also signal the first surges of sap from tree roots. It is this clear, watery tree sap collected from sugar maples that signals the beginning of spring to many in the Northeast.

Native Americans were the first to collect tree sap and cook it down into sweet sugar. The process was rather crude. Stone axes were used to chop away the tree bark and layers of sapwood from the maple trees. On warm spring days sap would drip from the exposed sapwood. Dripping sap was channeled into containers made of tree bark and vines. The tree sap was then emptied into large hollowed out logs and cooked, using stones that had been heated in a fire. The sap was often cooked into crystallized sugar that could be stored for future use.

The Europeans learned of maple sugaring from the Native Americans. Metal tools brought from the Old World improved the maple sugaring process. Augers were used to drill or tap trees, sumac or elderberry branches were hollowed out and made into spiles and channeled sap into wooden buckets called keelers. Large iron kettles were used to boil the sap into maple syrup. Often the kettles were placed on wooden levers over cooking fires. As water evaporated from the sap, the weight of the kettle would become lighter, the counter-weight of the lever would gradually lift the kettle further from the flame, preventing the sap from burning. This ingenious cooking method allowed other chores to be tended while making maple syrup.

Today sap is collected in many ways. Sugar maple trees are tapped using a brace and bit or drill. Drill bits are sunk 2 1/2 to 3 inches into the sapwood of maple trees, spiles are placed in these holes and sap is collected in metal buckets, sap bags, re-used plastic containers or large stainless steel sap vats.

Sap flows best on bright sunny days when daytime temperatures reach 40 degrees and evening temperatures dip into the low 20s. This freeze and thaw cycle of the earth helps to move the sap up and down the tree through the sapwood. On the average, each

spile placed in a tree will yield roughly 20 gallons of sap per season. In Washington County the sugaring season is rather short, beginning in late February and continuing through roughly the third week of March.

After the sap has been collected, it is filtered through wool socks to remove unwanted insects and particles of soil before boiling. Sap is cooked over a wood fire or propane gas in a stainless steel evaporator pan. Evaporation of the sap into syrup takes many hours. Tree sap upon being collected is roughly 96 % to 98% water. On average, 40 gallons of maple tree sap will yield one gallon of maple syrup. As the sap is cooked it becomes thicker, retaining more heat. When the temperature of the sap reaches 216 degrees or the sap is dense enough to float a syrup hydrometer, it is considered maple syrup. The finished maple syrup is filtered through an orlon or cheese cloth filter before bottling.

Syrup is graded according to color; the clearer the syrup the higher the quality. The clearest best grades of sap tend to be produced early in the sugaring season because bacteria growth and insect intrusion are less likely in cold weather. Pure maple syrup often looks nothing like name brand products and the taste — there is honestly no comparison.

Folks often like to try maple sugaring at home. It's really not hard. Find a few maples trees nearby; sugar maples are best, but any maple will do. Unhealthy trees and trees that are not 10 inches in diameter should not be tapped. Tap the tree using a drill or brace and bit, insert a spile, collect the sap and cook it, and temperature test the sap frequently using a candy thermometer. One word of caution: don't boil indoors if you have wallpaper, as the wallpaper may peel off the walls. Turkey fryers work very well for boiling small amounts of sap.

Washington County Parks and Recreation will be hosting a tour of the Mingo Creek County Park Sugarbush and a pancake breakfast Saturday, March 19, 2005. The cost is \$2.00 per person, which includes a 45 minute walking tour and an "all you can eat" pancake breakfast featuring 100% pure Mingo Creek Maple Syrup. Reservations are required. Tours begin every half hour starting at 9:00 a.m. and concluding at 1:00 p.m. Call 724-228-6867 for reservations or additional information.

Foster Care Parents Offer A Special Place For Children

By Maureen Griffin

Our featured foster/adoptive family this issue is Jennifer and Matthew Toland of rural West Finley, Pennsylvania. The Tolands took the foster care classes and were approved as foster parents on February 26, 2001. They have been a true asset to our CYS agency. Since their approval they have fostered approximately 16 children of all ages and races from young children, pre-adolescent to adolescent. They have reported that all of their placements have been positive.

Matthew and Jennifer have made a full commitment to all children residing in their home. Their family is comprised of parents, Matthew and Jennifer, two biological sons, Levi and Jesse, two adopted daughters, Janae and Amanda, and one current foster child, Stephanie. Not only have they opened their hearts and their home to foster children, the Tolands have given these children a



sense of permanency, a sense of belonging and a level of security that they may not otherwise have known.

Foster parents provide a ray of hope in a world otherwise shadowed by issues that are dangerous to a child's physical and mental health. Physical abuse, neglect, abandonment, drug problems, alcohol problems, and sexual abuse are some of the reasons a child is removed from his or her birth home. Understandably, the child is often afraid, angry, confused, and heart-broken from the events that led to his or her removal. Also, some foster children have special needs, such as emotional, behavioral, physical, or developmental problems. Every child needs a loving home where he or she can be safe and be on the road to a better life.

Adoption is often a consideration for foster parents. In fact, about one-third of the children placed in foster care are later adopted by their foster parents. But the question remains, are you willing to do what it takes to be a foster parent? If you or any of your friends or family members would be interested in becoming a foster parent, please contact

Mary Heaton
at Washington County
Children & Youth Services at
(724) 228-6884.

Master Builders Association Gives County Award

By Mary E. Helicke

The County Commissioners received the 2004 Building Excellence Award from the Master Builders Association of Western Pennsylvania for the construction of the Family Court Center. The award presentation was held at the Duquesne Club in Pittsburgh at a ceremony on Friday, January 21, 2005.

The Family Court Center, dedicated and opened on July 1, 2004, features an adaptive re-use and renovation of the former Washington County Jail. The Center contains one courtroom, five hearing rooms and office space for the County's Family Services Division. The Dick Corporation served as construction manager for the renovation of the facility and the Washington County Authority administered the project . . .



a job well done!
Congratulations on the award!

HEALTH CENTER SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN PILOT PROGRAM

The Washington County Health Center is honored to have been selected to participate in a state-wide project known as the Person Centered Care Collaborative. This collaborative is designed to introduce and educate nursing homes on the concepts and philosophies of culture transformation, as well as assisting in the development of a model of transformational practices and procedures.

Culture change has been identified by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) as a primary initiative today in long term care in nursing homes. Culture change is defined as transforming the practices, policies, and procedures of a nursing home to foster an environment where the residents and their quality of life are foremost in everything that occurs.

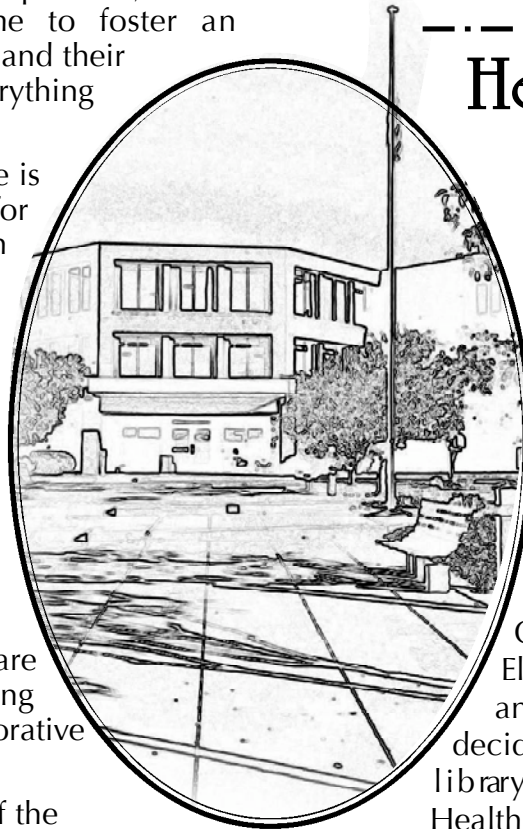
The concept of culture change is not new, having been promoted for many years by organizations such as the Eden Alternative and the Pioneer Network. However, it has only been recently that the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has identified culture change in nursing homes as one of their primary initiatives. To that end, Quality Insights of Pennsylvania (QIP), the CMS designated organization responsible for improving the quality of health care in Pennsylvania, will be conducting the Person Centered Care Collaborative pilot program over the next year.

Alvin Allison, Administrator of the Health Center, stated, "We are very proud of the quality of care that we provide at the Health Center...we have a very dedicated and talented staff who provide great care for our residents every day. However, we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life for our residents. The Person Centered Care Collaborative will be a great opportunity for us to continue in our efforts to focus on our residents."

Terry Crawford, the Director of Nursing at the Health Center, noted that, "We had already started exploring the concept of culture change. The Health Center has even started a team, which we call the 'Culture Club' to investigate ways of

helping to transform our facility's culture. We are very excited to have been selected to be part of the Person Centered Care Collaborative, and we are looking forward to working with QIP."

The collaborative will offer the participants three full-day learning sessions, a series of teleconferences, on-site visits, and a wealth of printed materials, as well as helpful insights from other providers who have pioneered the culture change revolution. Ultimately, the Health Center will use this support and insight to develop an individualized approach to culture change that will help to complete its transformation to a person centered care model.



Health Center Opens New Resident Library

By Al Allison

Three cadet Girl Scouts from Hickory Troop 3520 embarked on a Silver Award (the highest award a cadet can receive) project last summer for the Washington County Health Center. Lacey Love from Bulger, Elizabeth Minutello from McDonald, and Lauren Skrabski from Hickory, decided that they wanted to create a library for the residents of the Health Center.

The girls collected books from a variety of places; libraries, churches, families, friends and neighbors donated thousands of books for the project. They secured used shelving from County offices that were being moved. Once the materials were gathered, the search began for an appropriate location for the new resident library. Visibility and accessibility were prime considerations, and it was finally decided that a portion of the vending room, adjacent to the Health Center's lobby, would be an ideal location. Arrangements were made to move some of the vending machines to make space for the bookshelves. Lacey, Elizabeth, and Lauren



Paying Taxes On-line Now a Reality

By Dan Briner

Washington County Treasurer Francis L. King recently announced that payment of 2005 county real estate tax can now be done by electronic check using the World Wide Web.

The Treasurer, working in conjunction with the Board of County Commissioners and the Tax Assessment office, has created a treasurer web site that will permit taxpayers to view their current assessment data, payment history and payments due on-line, from the convenience of their home or any location with web access.

The site can be easily reached by visiting the County's web site, "co.washington.pa.us", scrolling to "row offices" followed by a click on "Treasurer". From there simply click on "tax payment inquiry" and following the detailed instructions. The site is very user-friendly and provides top security for anyone paying on-line.

Since the County is charged a fee for each electronic transaction, taxpayers will note there is a \$2.00 "convenience fee" for use of the payment service. Treasurer King feels that even with the convenience fee, this service will prove to be an advantage to many taxpayers, saving them a trip to the County Treasurer's office, finding and paying for parking, and possibly waiting in line to pay. With electronic check payment, the entire transaction should not take more than three to five minutes. Once payment is submitted, the user can view the transaction accepted and taxes paid.

King states that this is "an initial step in bringing county 'e-government' services to Washington County residents."



United Way – Final Results

By Mary E. Helicke

A final total of \$ 9,346.40 was collected for the United Way campaign.

We would like to thank the following organizations for their generosity and support...

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| All Clad | Bob Evans |
| Commissioner | Union Grill |
| Bracken Burns | Red Lobster |
| Commissioner | King of the Hill |
| Diana L. Irey | Beechie's Place |
| Barbara Gibbs | The Southside |
| Debbie Bardella | 84 Fitness |
| Judy Fisher | Mon Valley |
| G. Richard Zimmerman | Country Club |
| Mike Namie | The Village Green |
| Kathleen Flynn Reda | Carnegie |
| Phyllis Matheny | Science Center |
| John Pettit | Rotolo's |
| Francis King | The Washington |
| The Springhouse | Wild Things |
| Popcorn Willy's | The Riverhounds |

We would also like to extend our sincere congratulations to this year's prize winners ...

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Jim Fazzoni | Darla Pepper-Miller |
| Michael King | Randy Jackson |
| Gary Riley | Mary Jo Zullo |
| Jim Henderson | James Michelucci |
| April Plants | Janice Springer |
| Dee Burns | Karen Lebar |
| Traci McDonald | Don Ross |
| Terry Crawford | Joe Miller |
| Troy Breese | Gloria Smitsky |
| Terri O'Hara | Jeff Felton |
| Joy Ranko | Kerry Fox |
| Richard Cleveland | Barbara Gerbec |
| Al Allison | Vicki Fairfax |
| Joe Miller | Linda Belcher |
| Mary Ann Friend | Larry Spahr |
| Francis King | Gina Steranko |
| Kathy Stone | Barry Clark |
| Hilary Burchett | Mary Ann Haney |

Some food for thought: The Washington County Department of Public Safety maintains:

- 67 Municipal Emergency Response Plans,
- 14 School Plans,
- 73 Dam Emergency Plans,
- 42 Emergency Operations Plans for Chemical Facilities,
- the Washington County section of the Emergency Operations Plan for the Beaver Valley Nuclear Power Plant,
- and developed the Washington County Bomb Threat and Evacuation Plans,
- a state certified Haz-Mat Team that responds to hazardous materials accidents 24 hours a day 7 days a week;
- emergency medical quick response for Courthouse Square; the County Courthouse and the Family Court Center;
- and, is recognized by the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy as a Participating Rescue Service, and Fire Service,
- part of the Region 13 Counter-Terrorism Response Team, and is responsible for all aspects of the West Nile Virus Program, and
- dispatches over 200,000 calls every year through the 9-1-1 center.

SPRING EVENTS to Help Others

By Linda Belcher

Annual spring blood drive

Before you know it will be that time of the year again — the annual spring blood drive is just around the corner. It's scheduled for April 22, 2005.

Anyone who may be interested in taking time out of his or her busy schedule is invited to come and to "roll up your sleeves" to save a life.

Look for sign up sheets that will be distributed to each office the beginning of April.

Annual Daffodil Day – March 16th

The American Cancer Society will be conducting its annual daffodil day drive during the month of March. The kick-off is scheduled for the end of January and orders will be taken through mid-February. The daffodils will be delivered to the commissioners' office for pickup on March 16, 2005.

Items available to order include the following:

A bunch of 10 flowers - \$7

A vase with flowers and bow - \$12.

"Bear"-ing hope teddy bear and vase - \$25.00

Lollipops - \$1

Any questions on either of these programs, please contact Linda in the commissioners' office.

Human Resources Update

NEW EMPLOYEE DRESS CODE

The Board of Commissioners has recently approved a Dress Code Policy. The Board has a legitimate interest to ensure the public be served in a professional environment. An employee's appearance should contribute to this professionalism at all times. Employees are expected to dress in appropriate attire for a business atmosphere. The Dress Code policy sets forth the general rules of the County.

All departments should have received and posted a copy of this policy. Individual departments may have their own provisions regarding appropriate dress to meet the needs of the department. Employees are required to comply with these provisions regarding appropriate dress.

Should you have any questions relating to this policy, please contact your department head or supervisor.

HEALTH BENEFITS' UPDATE

During the last week of January, Health Assurance sent letters to plan members alerting them of the change in Vision Program Provider to Cole Vision and reminding them of the great benefits included in their health plan.

Health Assurance has a self-service website at www.healthassurance.cvtv.com, provides discounts on alternative and complementary care, including an annual \$150 health education program reimbursement, and has eliminated referrals in many of the plans. Chiropractic care still does require a referral.

Should you have any questions pertaining to your Health Assurance plan, please call Member Services at (800) 735-4404.

MetLife Dental Plan

County employees realized an 18% reduction in their dental plan cost due to competitive shopping with Acordia, our Broker of Record. The County currently pays the cost of individual coverage for eligible employees. Employees that purchase employee plus one dependent or family coverage should have noticed this decrease in their first paycheck in 2005.

Health Center

Opens New Resident Library

continued...

then painted the room in warm red and cream colors to help make it cozy and inviting. They then arranged the bookshelves and shelved the donated books. Games, cards, magazines and videos that were also donated were arranged on the shelves.

An official ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the library and to recognize the achievement of Lacey, Elizabeth, and Lauren with the presentation of their Silver Award pins was held at 6 p.m. on December 16th. The ceremony was attended by John White and Donald Martin, representatives of the Resident Council; Alvin Allison, Health Center Administrator; Larry Maggi, Washington County Commissioner; and the families and members of Girl Scout Troops 3520 and 3576.

Commissioner Maggi also presented each of the girls with a Certificate of Achievement, signed by the members of the Board of Commissioners, recognizing their attainment of the Silver Award. Speaking to Lacey, Elizabeth, and Lauren, Commissioner Maggi said, "It is a pleasure to be here to recognize your achievement. I am proud to know that we have such fine young ladies in Washington County, who would work so diligently on behalf of the residents of the Health Center."

The library is a very welcome addition to the Health Center, and is being greatly enjoyed by the residents. Perhaps the essence of the library project was best summarized by Lauren Skrabski, who stated, "It makes you feel good to know that you have done something that will make a difference in someone's life."

The Washington County Health Center serves up to 288 residents in the Chartiers Township facility. The goal of the Health Center is not only to provide the residents with quality health care, but to offer them a rich and full quality of life as well. To achieve that goal, the Health Center provides a variety of daily activities designed to meet the needs and interests of the diverse group of residents. Although the Activities Department has a number of periodicals and books available to the residents, it seemed appropriate that a special resident library could make a meaningful difference for those who enjoy reading. A special thank you to the Girl Scouts who made this possible.

Washington County Department of Parks & Recreation

Park Happenings Winter 2005

FEBRUARY

Wild and Wonderful Pre-School Program – A Touch of Nature

Tuesday, February 1 &
Wednesday, February 2, 2005
10:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m.
Mingo Creek Park Office

Introduction to Fly Tying

Tuesdays, February 8, 15 & 22, 2005
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Courthouse Square – Room 103

Needle and Yarn Craft Workshop

Wednesday, February 9, 2005
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Citizens Library – Washington

Build a Bluebird Box

Saturday, February 26, 2005
10:00 a.m.
Mingo Creek Park Office

Winter Ramble

Saturday, February 26, 2005
1:00 p.m.
Mingo Creek Park Office

MARCH

Wild & Wonderful Pre-School Program – Maple Sugaring

Tuesday, March 1 or Wednesday, March 2, 2005
10:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m.
Mingo Creek Park – Shelter 6

Needle and Yarn Craft Workshop

Wednesday, March 9, 2005
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Mon Valley YMCA

Maple Sugaring – Sugar Bush Tour and Breakfast

Saturday, March 19, 2005
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Mingo Creek Park – Shelter 6

Department of Public Safety Always Ready to Help...

By Tina Clemens

Floods, fires, damaging winds, storms, mass care, law enforcement dispatch, natural or manmade disasters, chemical accidents, and emergency medical response — sounds like a scene from Armageddon. But this is just a sample of the responses that the Washington County Department of Public Safety (DPS) handles.

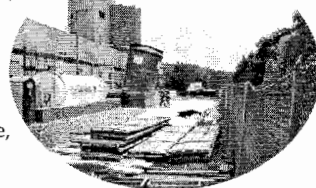
DPS consists of several divisions that all work together in planning for, dispatching, and responding to, county emergencies. The individual offices in the department include: Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Chemical Preparedness, the Washington County 911 Dispatch Center, the Highway Safety Department, and the Washington County Haz-Mat Team.



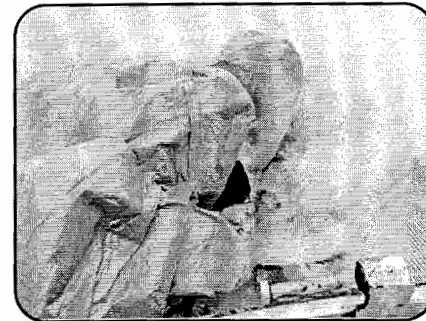
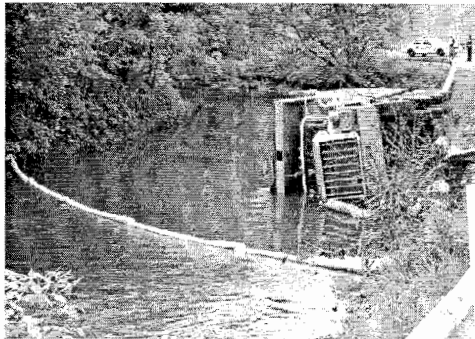
How do all of these divisions work together? Many of these incidents are prepared for by the DPS in conjunction with the Local Emergency Responders before the winds start to blow, the water starts to rise, or the hazardous chemicals are released. This preparedness occurs through training of the emergency responders on how to safely respond to an incident, teaching the dispatchers how to receive, and dispatch the call for help, and developing Emergency Response Plans for known hazard areas and various types of natural disasters under the direction of the Emergency Management Office.

When the emergency does occur, the initial call comes into the 9-1-1 Center where telecommunications call takers must prod the caller for as much information as they can about what, where, when, and how the emergency occurred. This information gathering is done while keeping the caller calm and sending the call to the proper dispatchers all within less than a minute.

Once a dispatcher receives the call, he or she must alert the emergency responders from that area to respond (Fire, Police, EMS, Haz-Mat). The dispatcher keeps in touch with the call taker and updates the emergency responders as they are en route to the scene. On probable large-scale incidents, the 9-1-1 supervisor notifies the DPS Staff.



As an emergency escalates, such as in a hazardous chemical release or flood, the Emergency Management Staff responds. When an increase in calls for resources and assistance for a specific incident occurs, Emergency Management opens the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The field communications unit goes to the scene for a command post to run all on-scene operations with the incident commander.



Back at the DPS offices, the EOC starts to receive all of the calls for that specific incident from the 9-1-1 center by a forwarding line (this enables the dispatch center to concentrate on the rest of the county's in-coming emergencies). The calls are sorted by priority and transmitted to the Field Communications Unit that sends the available on-scene resources to the additional calls for assistance. Also, any resources that are needed by the on-scene responders are sent through the field communications unit to the EOC, where they utilize the various banks of phones and resource lists to get the resources to the responders.

The EOC must also work with the municipal and outside agencies to ensure that the proper steps are taken for the safety of the residents of Washington County. These steps may include: evacuation and displaced citizen sheltering, food and rehabilitation for responders, restoration of utilities, notifications to The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and Federal Emergency Management Agency, declarations of emergencies both local and county, notifications to the media with updates, directing resources, notifications to the elected officials (local, county, and sometimes state), setting evacuation routes, and completing damage assessments.

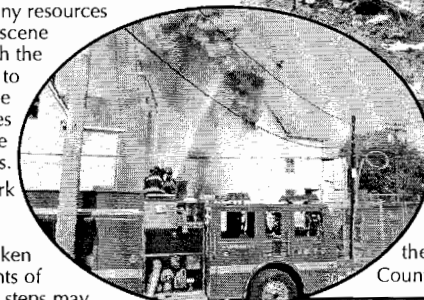
When an incident occurs, a lot must be accomplished and may need to be maintained for several days until the incident is closed out. This is where the volunteers and staff work well together. All decisions in the EOC go through the DPS Director Jeffrey Yates,

cascading down to all those who need the assistance. As the incident comes to a close, the job of the DPS offices is not complete yet. DPS works with local, county, state, and federal agencies to ensure that the victims receive the care that is needed. Then, once that is accomplished, everything comes full circle.

How? The incident is evaluated and additional plans are developed to assist.

New training is developed and implemented. Equipment and resources are cleaned, replaced or purchased for future responses. And all stands ready for the next emergency.

Throw in one or two major disasters a year... No worries, just another day in the office.



Regardless of the emergency or situation, the chain of command works well for DPS and the safety of Washington County's citizens.

