

Letters To The Editor

Flushing Hard-Earned Money Down The Drain

To The Editor:
These are difficult financial times for everyone. Luckily, in many cases, we can make choices to alleviate ever-rising costs.

In past months, I have downgraded my cable, my Internet and my phone to the bare, basic plans. I have found that super glue and foam spray insulation are great repair tools to help hold an old car together. Knowing that you have some control over the amount you pay for a service, or if you even want that service, does give some peace of mind.

Now that leads to the point of this letter, which is the Hustontown Joint Sewage Authority. I opened my bill today, once again experiencing immediate cramping, sweating and nausea. This is a service I never requested or wanted. They seem to have total control over the local residents' wallets. The original cost for this mandatory service was \$105 a

quarter. It then rose to \$135. Today's quarterly bill is for \$175. Along with today's bill is a "heads up" letter stating our next bill will be for \$195.

I would like to know what my options are here. Can I downgrade somehow? Perhaps buy a smaller package that limits my number of flushes. Could I possibly sign a contract to only flush during off-peak hours? Or better yet, can I choose to eliminate this service altogether? I already know the answers are "no, no and no." I feel that Hustontown residents have been forced into a "bailout" situation by Hustontown Sewage.

Well, now that I have vented, I need to gather up old phone books and newspapers. My next downgrade and cutback plan will probably include toilet paper.

Cathy Gordon
Hustontown

Town Meeting

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be held at 7 p.m. on May 7 at the Big Cove Tannery Lutheran Church. Additional meetings include:

- June 4 at Burnt Cabins Auction Barn
- July 2, Green Hill Sewing Club
- August 6, Union Township Building

Workshop

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own well and septic system. The purpose of the workshop is to discuss common well problems and how to address them, what kind of water testing is needed

- September 3, Wells Tannery Community Center
 - October 1, Needmore Bible Church Fellowship Hall
 - November 5, Warfordsburg Senior Center
 - December 3, McConnellsburg Senior Center
- All meetings begin at 7 p.m. For more information on any meeting, residents can reach the commissioners' office by calling 717-485-3691 or by e-mail at commissioners@co.fulton.pa.us.

and how to respond to the results, to describe the parts of a septic system, what each part does, and how to insure all the parts keep on working. In addition, your questions are needed to make the workshop successful. Register or call for more information at 485-4111.

FRSB

From Page One

od, resulting in savings to the district.

In previously discussing the project, elementary Principal Byron Helsel stated the replacement procedure will allow the district to work in smaller numbers, thereby not replacing the majority of needed computers at one time.

The tentative 2009-10 school calendar was approved after ongoing talks between county school administrators.

Homebound instruction was authorized for a high school student.

Fourth-grade students will be travelling to the Jaffa Shrine Circus in Altoona on April 14, while students enrolled in kindergarten are scheduled to visit the Mishler Theatre, also in Altoona, on April 15. Reading reward trips have also been scheduled for May 7 and 11 at the Bedford Elks Bowling Alley.

The annual FFA banquet will be held in the high school cafeteria and auditorium on April 30 at 6 p.m. Meanwhile, a Mother's Day piano recital will be held by music instructor Cynthia Robinette on May 10 in the auditorium.

It was reported the high school gymnasium was used by the Forbes Road Lions Club Sat-

urday morning for the annual easter egg hunt.

Daisy Girl Scout meetings are scheduled to be held in an elementary classroom one day weekly through May. In addition, the high school gymnasium has been earmarked for a Family Fun Night for the sixth-grade boys basketball team one Friday evening during the month of April. The event will be coordinated by the district athletic director.

In hopes of receiving her reading specialist certificate and fulfilling her required 75 clinical hours, sixth-grade teacher Christie Daniels was granted authorization to use the elementary school to work with students between kindergarten and grade nine in the area of reading.

Coaches Kayla Knepper, Brandi Robertson and Mark Schilajew received approval to use the district's gymnasiums during the off-season for basketball recreation from April through November. Among the projects tentatively planned are several student camps.

Fort Littleton resident Melanie Schoen was approved to offer sign-ups for a junior high cheerleading squad for the upcoming 2009-10 school year.

The board also conducted an additional executive session to discuss negotiation issues.

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PUBLISHER

Jamie S. Groathead

STAFF WRITERS

Lindsay R. Mellott • Chanin Rotz-Mountz • Jean Snyder

SUPPORT STAFF

Charles Dean • Trudy Gelvin • David Gregory • Robin Souders

417 E. Market Street, P.O. Box 635

McConnellsburg, PA 17233

717-485-3811 or 485-4513 Fax: 717-485-5187

E-mail: fultoncountynews@comcast.net

On the Web @ fultoncountynews.com

Analysis:

Negotiating A Minefield Of Bad News

By Ted Nebrony

AP NATIONAL WRITER

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Does the name Byran Uyesugi ring a bell? Odds are not. What about Robert A. Hawkins? Or Mark Barton? Terry Ratzmann? Robert Stewart?

Each entered the national consciousness when he picked up a gun and ended multiple lives. Uyesugi, 1999, Hawaii office building, Nebraska dead. Hawkins, 2007, Sevraska shopping mall, nine dead. Barton, Ratzmann and Stewart — 24 dead among them in 1999 (Atlanta brokerage offices), 2005 (Wisconsin church service) and last week (North Carolina rehab center).

And each has been largely forgotten as the parade of multiple killings in America melts into an indistinguishable blur. We beam, we mourn, we move on.

What's even more disturbing is that the list above was cherry-picked from a far lengthier tally of recent mass shootings in the United States. And now, this weekend, on a crisp, sunny Saturday morning in Pittsburgh, the lives of three police officers ended in gunfire after a domestic dispute turned lethal.

The mass shootings that left 14 people dead in Binghamton, N.Y., on Friday were horrifying, depressing, nationally wrenching. They were also, to some extent, unsurprising in a society where the term "mass shooting" has lost its status as unthinkable aberration and become mere fodder for a fresh news cycle.

"We have to guard against the senseless violence that this tragedy represents," President Barack Obama said in Europe on Saturday. Senseless violence: Two centuries from now, if we're not careful, it could be an epi-

logue for our era.

Even in a media-saturated nation that encourages short memories, these numbers are conversation-stopping: More than 50 people dead in the past month in American mass shootings and their aftermaths. It's to the point where on Saturday, dizzily, the mayor of Binghamton found himself offering Pittsburgh his sympathies.

It becomes almost impossible to keep up. By Saturday night, there was more dispiriting news from another corner of the country: In Graham, Wash., five children between 7 and 16 years old were found shot to death in a mobile-home park — apparently at the hands of their father, who then killed himself.

Put aside for a moment the debate over guns. This isn't about policy. It's about asking the urgent question: What is happening in the American psyche that prevents people from defusing their own anguish and rage before they end the lives of others? Why are we killing each other?

This is not an era of good feeling in the United States. We have under our belt eight years of pernicious terrorism angst, six years of Iraq war weariness and, now, months of wondering how bad the American economy's going to get and when — or, worse, whether — it's going to come back. People are tense. There's less inclination to help out your fellow human being.

Meanwhile, anchors and analysts and witnesses and bloggers cast about in an information-age fog trying to make sense of something that is, in the worst way, nonsensical. They rush to offer solutions, but the thing they typically dodge is that we seem to be powerless to stop it all — that our

community, our neighbors, may be next. That's too terrifying to contemplate, not to mention too open-ended for American news consumers reared on tidy Hollywood endings.

The Binghamton newspaper, the Press & Sun Bulletin, seemed to acknowledge the resignation in a glum editorial Saturday that wondered if it was simply, sadly, and inevitably Binghamton's turn to give up a few of its people to the juggernaut.

"It is our turn to grieve and to rally in support of those whose lives have been shattered," the newspaper said. "And it's our turn to hug those in our own families and wonder how a quiet, rainy Friday in a peaceful place became the setting for such a nightmare."

The strangest of contradictions hangs over the Binghamton shootings. The shooter and many of the victims were immigrants — part of the pool of human beings who look to America as a place of opportunity and take often anonymous steps to realize their dreams here. On Friday, the idea that had beckoned them betrayed them.

The man believed to be the shooter, Jiverly Wong, had lost his job at an assembly plant, was barely getting by on unemployment and was frustrated that the American dream, so highly billed and coveted, wasn't coming through for him. Early reports suggest that the suspect in the Pittsburgh officers' killings, too, was angered at being laid off from a glass factory.

People are of course responsible for their actions, but it's hard to avoid wondering what's afoot in the darkest recesses of what we like to call American exceptionalism. For so long, the national narrative has been so bull-

ish about equality of opportunity, so persuasive in its romance of possibility for all. Is it so subversive to speculate, then, that when the engine of possibility runs into roadblocks, people can't cope?

Without excusing one whit of the violent tendencies that ended with so many bullets in so many bodies from Binghamton to North Carolina to Alabama to California in the past month, isn't it time, finally, to figure out where this national dream makes a wrong turn?

"Maybe research can prevent further tragedies of this type," a man named Charles Whitman wrote one day in 1966. Then he ascended a tower at the University of Texas, looked out over the campus, pulled out a shotgun, three rifles and three pistols and killed 16 people.

Forty-three years and countless reams of research and lost loved ones later, we have not figured it out. Today, the American Civic Association in Binghamton says so. The Pittsburgh Police Department says so. The vulnerable people at the Pinelake Health and Rehab Center in Carthage, N.C., say so.

Of Jiverly Wong, Binghamton police Chief Joseph Zikuski had this to say Saturday: "He must have been a coward." Perhaps. But that's the beginning of an answer, not the end of one. On Friday, the federal government announced that 663,000 Americans lost their jobs in America. What's truly unsettling in America's new era of gloom and dead ends is wondering how many of those 663,000 might be deeply, irrevocably angry about it — and might have a gun.

Because the American tragedies that haven't happened yet are the most terrifying ones of all.

Pa. Newspaper Group Blasts Open-Records Ruling

By Peter Jackson

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — The Pennsylvania Newspaper Association has sharply criticized the state Open Records Office for a ruling that the group says would allow school boards and other agencies to conduct more public business behind closed doors.

"These are public access laws and if they're going to be interpreted, I think they should be interpreted on the side of public access," Melissa Melewsky, media law counsel for the association, said Friday.

At issue is a draft budget that the Northampton Area School Board discussed at a special meeting in February.

The board provided a copy of the proposal to a reporter for The Morning Call in Allentown the day after the meeting but redacted the dollar figures. The reported appealed, and the Open Records Office upheld the school board's decision to with-

hold the numbers.

In her ruling, appeals officer Lucinda Glinn reasoned that the board didn't reach a decision at the meeting and could withhold the information under a provision in the state's Right-to-Know public records law that exempts documents used in "predecisional deliberations."

"There are no facts of record that show that the school board intended to take official action upon the redacted document at issue," Glinn wrote. "There is no evidence that discussions for the purpose of rendering a decision were conducted, or that the Board did any more than informally discuss, question and learn about" the proposed budget for the year that starts July 1.

Emily Leader, an attorney for the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, said the case is a textbook example of the kind of situations lawmakers intended the "predecisional" exemption to cover.

"This exemption has meaning and, if you made (the Northampton draft budget) a public record under the facts of this case, I don't see how the exemption could have meaning," Leader said.

Melewsky said the budget figures should have been made public because the "predecisional" exemption does "not apply to a proposal once it is presented to a quorum of board members for deliberation at a public meeting."

Pennsylvania's open-meetings law — also called the Sunshine Act — defines "deliberation" as "the discussion of agency business held for the purpose of making a decision."

Melewsky said the Right-to-Know and open-meetings laws are intended to ensure public access to most agency deliberations, whether they are confined to the day of the vote or unfold over the course of weeks.

"If we don't have the docu-

ments to follow along in those discussions, then the Sunshine Act and (the provision of the Right-to-Know Law) could be rendered meaningless," she said.

The newspaper has 30 days from Monday's ruling to decide if it will appeal the ruling in court.

The newspaper association, which lobbied for last year's overhaul of one of the nation's weakest open-records laws, warned that the decision could turn back the clock by more than two decades to a time when the open-meetings law required meetings to hold open meetings only when they were voting or taking official action — allowing them to debate issues and make decisions behind closed doors.

Leader, the school boards' attorney, said the question of whether or not deliberations should be open will often depend on the circumstances.

"I think the courts won't have trouble parsing this case by case," she said.

Teaching Kids To Say "I'm Sorry" Needs No Apology

By Kellie B. Gormly

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The Morgan kids — Jack, 8; Ava, 5; and Abby, 4 — of Forest Hills know what they need to do when they have made a mistake that harms someone.

"They know that when they have hurt someone or have done something wrong, they just know that they have to apologize and make amends for it, and mean it," says Holly Morgan, 40. She and her husband, Eric, say they emphasize respect and empathy with their children.

"The golden rule is you want to treat somebody else the way you want to be treated," Holly Morgan says she tells her kids.

When so many adults are lousy at sincerely apologizing — or never do the "I'm culpa" thing at all — it's hard for kids to learn how to acknowledge and correct a wrong and make things right with a person they have hurt, experts say. Far too many adults serve as poor role models. Think about the politicians, sports stars and other high-profile people who publicly give the insulting non-apology, "I'm sorry if anyone found my comments offensive," for instance. Such non-apologies take no responsibility for a wrong and express no remorse: They actually blame the injured person for his or her reaction, experts say.

Whitney Lynne Fry, a counselor for student affairs at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, says that being a humble person and apologizing regularly are the best ways to teach kids the same values and skills. Repentant adults set good examples and raise repentant kids, who are more likely to turn into adults who can

apologize effectively, rather than pride-filled people who are unconcerned about how their actions affect others.

"Foremost, I think it's important to lead by example if you're a parent," Fry says. She has a lot of experience with children, including running counseling groups for children with special needs.

"It's just as vital for parents to say 'I'm sorry,'" Fry says. "All children model who they see ... By the time they reach adulthood, we hope that they understand this."

Parents need to be willing to apologize for their mistakes not only to their children, but to their spouse, and other people in their life, Fry says, in order to be an example of good behavior.

Chicago-area author and psychotherapist Aaron Cooper agrees.

"The example we set is what we're going to teach," Cooper says. He is the author of "I Just Want My Kids to Be Happy! Why You Shouldn't Say It, Why You Shouldn't Think It, What You Should Embrace Instead." "If we do not apologize to our children, they're not going to learn from us how to apologize."

"So many adults operate with the belief that an adult should not need to apologize to a child. It may feel like it undermines their authority," Cooper says. "It actually enhances their credibility as a teacher. (Kids) know it's just part of being human to do that."

Teaching kids to apologize requires more than teaching them to say the magic "I'm sorry" words, Fry and Cooper say; the children also need to take re-

sponsibility for their actions. If they throw food on the floor, for instance, they shouldn't just apologize, they should clean up the mess.

"A lot of people will just say 'I'm sorry,' and not really mean it and not really do anything," Fry says.

Cooper says that learning to apologize is a fundamental skill that helps to teach children empathy, and prepares them for successful relationships in life. Making mistakes is inevitable, he says, but failing to apologize for them can hurt someone and damage a relationship irreparably.

"Teaching our kids the importance of apologies is one way we teach an even bigger skill: perspective-taking," Cooper says. "That's the skill that we want to teach to children — what it feels like to be in someone else's shoes."

Kathleen Ceroni, a retired high-school teacher from Mt. Pleasant, says she has learned as a teacher and mother how important it is to apologize to and around youngsters, if she expects them to do the same.

"I'm struck by how difficult it is with some people...to say, 'Hey, wait a minute. OK, you know what, I made a mistake,'" says Ceroni, 57. "It's been normalized not to apologize, no doubt about it...I don't think kids hear enough people in positions of authority admitting to being wrong and saying, 'Look, I'm sorry.'"

Her son — Andrew, 16 — has learned how to apologize effectively, and doesn't need to be asked; he self-corrects, Ceroni says.

"I think there's power in

teaching kids to apologize," she says. "I think that when kids are able to acknowledge that they made a mistake, their potential for growth multiplies tremendously. Apologies can be very liberating."

In her preschool class, Melissa Laughery's students know what to do if they offend a classmate: they color in and personalize a printout with drawings of hands, write that they are sorry, and give the picture to the peer.

"I ask the children how God wants us to treat one another, and tell them to treat others the way we would like to be treated," says Laughery, of Tarentum. She teaches at Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament School in Natrona Heights, and promotes the slogan "Helping Hands, not Hurting Hands."

With Laughery's own kids — twins Niah and Neve, 11 — she discusses situations needing apologies from the other person's perspective. She asks them, "How would you like that?" and "How would you feel if that same thing happened to you?"

"They get pretty emotional about it," Laughery says.

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