



Amy Haller-Phillips

Sheri Lee and Don Steward, CEO of Heroes Supporting Heroes, discuss upcoming projects for the nonprofit organization at its headquarters in the former Noblestown United Methodist Church in Oakdale. Mrs. Lee is the wife of Chief Master Sgt. John Lee, who started the group.

‘HE STOOD IN THE GAP’

A Findlay sergeant’s single act of kindness launched an effort to help families of deployed military personnel — then it grew beyond even that

By Amy Phillips-Haller

The gutters hung precariously on the house that icy day in February 2012, when John Lee pulled into the driveway to help.

The Air Force civil engineer, now a chief master sergeant, had returned from deployment one week earlier and heard about a couple whose gutters needed to be repaired but whose son could not help because he was on deployment.

Without hesitation, Sgt. Lee of Findlay packed tools in his vehicle and headed to the couple’s home. He cleared the ice, cleaned out the gutters and anchored them back into place.

“That is how it all began,” said Sgt. Lee’s wife, Sheri Lee. “He stood in the gap for his brothers and sisters that were far away.”

More calls for help came. When Sgt. Lee couldn’t fill a need, he’d find others who could.

“It was a snowball effect,” Mrs. Lee said. “As men and women were returning home from deployment, they were



Chief Master Sgt. John Lee

also offering to help.”

Within months, the Lees had organized Heroes Supporting Heroes, turning Sgt. Lee’s one act of kindness into a nonprofit organization to help others.

“We realized this service wasn’t just in our hearts, but [in] others as well,” Mrs. Lee said.

Heroes Serving Heroes isn’t only for members of the military, she said. “Everyone is a hero — whether you are a single mother or a senior citizen, you are still a hero.”

At a graduation party in June 2012 — just months after Sgt. Lee had repaired the gutters — the Lees met Don Steward and Jeff Lutz, who had formed West Allegheny Work Camp, an organization intended to help families who needed home repairs.

“We realized that our missions were aligned,” Mr. Steward said. “We decided instead of competing, let’s come together and be one.”

The Lees, Mr. Steward and Mr. Lutz went to the boards of their organizations with the idea of merging the two groups and then started the process of acquiring a nonprofit designation for Heroes Supporting Heroes.

Because West Allegheny Work Camp already had a relationship with West Allegheny Ministerial Organization, Heroes Supporting Heroes could receive charitable donations under the

SEE **HEROES**, PAGE LX-6

Brentwood

Borough to move its offices, EMS, police force

Civic center, former dairy chosen as sites

By Margaret Smykla

In 2012, Brentwood council considered several options for its aging borough building, including one that called for renovating its civic center building at Brentwood Park and moving its administrative offices there.

The borough never acted on that plan.

But five years later, borough officials dusted off the idea and now they have approved a similar plan, which calls for remodeling the civic center to house administrative offices and council chambers. The police department and emergency medical services will be moved to the former Snee Dairy property on Brownsville Road, which the borough purchased earlier this year.

The total project cost would be about \$6.4 million.

Council on Monday authorized the borough architect to proceed with final design documents associated with what has been called Option 3. The vote was 6-0, with Councilwoman Stephanie Fox absent.

“The civic center needs close to \$1 million in renovations. This will take care of that and give the administration a site,” council President John Frombach said.

The one-story civic center, built in the 1970s, consists of a hall with seating for up to 100 people and two meeting rooms.

It needs a new roof and foundation; exterior improvements, including painting; new lighting; handicapped accessibility for the restrooms and doors; and other items.

Under the tentative plan, borough administration would occupy 3,600 square feet, and council chambers would occupy about 1,600 square feet. The estimated renovation costs would be \$1.77 million, and the “soft” costs, such as architectural and engineering fees, would be \$486,000, for a total of

SEE **BOROUGH**, PAGE LX-5

Unitarian Universalists dedicate new sanctuary in Mt. Lebanon

More space needed as membership grows

By Peter Smith
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills on Sunday dedicated their new sanctuary and education

wing, a project that was decades in the dreaming and years in the planning.

The church, on Washington Road in Mt. Lebanon, had met in the former living room of a mansion called Sunnyhill, which it had acquired in 1971, soon after its founding. But even after one expansion in the 1990s, they found there was never enough space and that some attendees

would drop out, frustrated by the tight quarters.

Now it has dedicated a new, purpose-built sanctuary, with a simple pitched wooden ceiling and large windows that flood the room with light.

The \$2.6 million project also includes new classrooms and office space.

The gabled facade of the new structure blends with that of the ex-

isting mansion, whose rooms are still used for classes and other functions. As the full name of the church is a mouthful, members often informally call their church Sunnyhill.

The church has grown by at least a quarter to 221 members in the past few years, and it especially received a bump after last year’s presidential election, said its pastor, the Rev. Jim Magaw.

That began with a service of vespers held a couple of nights after the election, which drew people who felt “a lot of the values that are important to them and to a lot of Americans had just been left behind,” he said.

Unitarian Universalists are part of a movement dating to the birth of the republic and have always

SEE **CHURCH**, PAGE LX-5

On the Radar // Four things you need to know in your neighborhood:

NORTH

Blessing of pets

St. Brendan Episcopal Church will have a blessing of pets at 11:30 a.m. Sunday at the church, 2365 McAleer Road, Franklin Park. Pets can have their nails clipped for free, and owners can get a free photo of their pets. Children are invited to bring favorite stuffed animals for a blessing as well. Pet experts will be on hand to provide information. For more information: 412-364-5974.

SOUTH

Interfaith dialogue

A panel of eight people, each of a different faith, will discuss the aspects of their respective religions at the South Hills Interfaith Dialogue from 2 to 3 p.m. Sunday at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2040 Washington Road, Upper St. Clair. The event is sponsored by the church and the Sisterhood of Beth El Congregation in Scott. For more information: www.westminster-church.org.

EAST

Army band and chorus

The U.S. Army Field Band & Soldiers Chorus will perform in concert at 7 p.m. Wednesday in the Robert A. Read Performing Arts Center at Gateway High School, 3000 Gateway Campus Blvd., Monroeville. The program will include classical, semi-classical and popular selections as well as choral arrangements, military marches and patriotic favorites. The performance is sponsored by Gateway High School.

WEST

Open house at Mooncrest

Originally developed as housing for workers in defense industries during World War II, the Mooncrest neighborhood of Moon has seen several changes over the years. Mooncrest Neighborhood Programs will host an open house at 4 p.m. Nov. 9 at the Mooncrest Community Center, 308 Hemlock Drive, to celebrate the revitalization efforts in the neighborhood by the organization and by the Felician Sisters.



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Schools

BETHEL PARK

Students will have to make up two days of school that were missed earlier this month due to written threats of violence.

The board set Feb. 19 and March 29 as make-up days.

The district canceled classes Oct. 12 and Oct. 16 after online rumors of threats targeting Bethel Park High School.

The police had determined the threats were not credible, but the district erred on the side of caution and closed school on the targeted days.

NORTH ALLEGHENY

The district's research last year into student stress included focus groups with students, families and staff that looked at such possible stressors as the early starting time of the school day and weighted grades.

Two public meetings will be held on the subject — Nov. 9 at Marshall Middle School and Nov. 13 at Carson Middle School. Both meetings will begin at 7 p.m.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend an 8:30 a.m. school start time for adolescents. North Allegheny High School students begin their day at 7:25 a.m.

The meeting on weighted grades — extra points given for honors and advanced placement courses — will include input from colleges and universities, many of which remove the weights when students apply, officials say.

The problem with weighted grades, district officials say, is that students feel they have to take the classes to get into college, leading to additional stress. Possible moves include eliminating weighted grades completely or capping the number of courses a student can receive weighted grades for each year.

Unitarian Universalists dedicate sanctuary

CHURCH, FROM LX-1

been on the vanguard of liberal religion, championing everything from abolition and women's rights to LGBT rights.

Rev. Magaw said he never endorses candidates but strongly emphasizes values such as tolerance, equality and human dignity.

The church organized a bus to the Women's March in Washington, held a day after President Donald Trump's inauguration in protest of anticipated reversals on policies ranging from immigration to climate change.

"Sometimes in the media there tends to be a portrayal of all religion being represented by the religious right, and then other extreme is [represented by] secularists," he said. "I think people are understanding there is something more than just those two extreme poles and are really looking for religious community without the trappings of traditional religion."

Unitarian Universalists have no doctrinal creed but provide a spiritual community for those sharing stated commitments to seven principles, including human dignity, justice, acceptance, free inquiry, conscience, community and respect for "the interdependent web of all existence."

The Unitarian Universalist Association says it has about 200,000 people on its rolls in about 1,000 congregations nationwide.



Andrew Rush/Post-Gazette

The Rev. Jim Magaw, minister, and Jennifer McGlothlin, director of religious education, stand in the new sanctuary of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills in Mt. Lebanon.

Jennifer McGlothlin, director of religious education, said many families find their way to Sunnyhill because they're looking for an alternative to more conservative religious congregations.

"They're looking for a place for their children to be among other kids that are growing up in like-

minded households," she said. The curriculum has regular units on world religions, social justice and Unitarian Universalist values, and it also offers an extensive sexuality education program.

And whereas many churches have confirmation events, each youth customizes an individual coming-of-

age service.

"Instead of confirming the beliefs of the church, the kids are asked to come up with their own statement of faith, whatever that would be," she said.

Longtime member Denny McCracken said these services are especially meaningful, particularly because it acknowledges that beliefs

are not fixed and will change as youths grow into adulthood.

"Most of the time they say, 'This is what I believe now,'" he said. "It's a process."

Peter Smith; peter-smith@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1416; Twitter @PG_PeterSmith.

Borough to move offices, police, EMS to civic center, former dairy

BOROUGH, FROM LX-1

\$2.25 million.

The new building on the 1.5-acre Snee site would be one story and would have 7,668 square feet of space. Construction costs would be roughly \$3 million and soft costs about \$1 million.

Matt Franz of HHSR Engineers and Architects

told council there were four conceptual plans for a new municipal building on the Snee site at 3735 Brownsville Road. The current structure on the property was condemned by the borough in 2014.

Option 1 was to house police, EMS, administration and council in a two-story building. Option 2 omitted

the EMS offices. The estimated cost of each option was \$6.2 million.

Option 4 was to solely house the police at Snee, and place the administration and council at the renovated civic center, at roughly the same cost as Option 3.

The current municipal building at 3624 Brownsville Road, which is more than a

century old, houses the police, council chambers, administration and EMS. Among other problems, its windows, roof and walls leak when it rains; the rear brick wall is separating due to old age; there is no elevator for handicapped accessibility; and its heating and cooling system needs to be replaced.

Officials say it would cost

about \$6 million to bring it up to state code.

Mr. Frombach said after the meeting that the tentative plan is to sell the current borough building and the adjacent property at 10 Marylea Ave.

Margaret Smykla, freelance writer; suburbanliving@post-gazette.com.



**Saturday
October 28**

Elizabeth Township Parade - 10:30am
Mt. Lebanon Parade - 11:30am

**Tuesday
October 31**

Baldwin, Bethel Park, Brentwood, Castle Shannon, Dormont, Elizabeth, Jefferson Hills, Mt. Lebanon, Peters Twp., Pleasant Hills, South Park, Upper St. Clair, Whitehall - 6-8pm

**Tuesday
October 31**

North Strabane, West Mifflin - 6-7:30pm



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Mt. Lebanon Parade - 11:30am

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**Tuesday
October 31**

North Strabane, West Mifflin - 6-7:30pm

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