

## Meshoppen Cat Rescue



Please contact Paula at 570-877-9624 if interested in meeting Stubby. We need volunteers!

Stubby is an adult, bobtail female. She is spayed and up to date on her vaccinations. Stubby is part of our new "Seniors for Seniors" program and has a low adoption fee.

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Wyalusing Council Rejects Park Project Bids

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WVHS Students Excel In State Competition

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Laceyville Could Return To In-Person Meetings

COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic in Meshoppen On May 14

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WVHS Thinclads Conclude Home Slate with Sweeps



May 6, 2021

# ROCKET-COURIER



Number 18 of Our 133rd Year

Wyalusing, Pennsylvania

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Photos by David Keeler

Leatherstocking Gas Co. and the Wyalusing Area School District hosted a ground-breaking ceremony on May 5 to celebrate the beginning of a project that will bring natural gas service to the district, Wyalusing Borough and parts of Wyalusing Township. From left are Greater Wyalusing Chamber of Commerce President and owner of Grovedale Winery, Jeff Homer; Wyalusing

Borough Mayor Suky Burgess; Leatherstocking CEO Mike German; Jason Krise, aide to state Rep. Tina Pickett; Wyalusing School Superintendent Dr. Jason Bottiglieri; U.S. Rep. Fred Keller; Bradford County Commissioner Chairman Daryl Miller; state Sen. Gene Yaw; Wyalusing School Board President Matt Muench and GWCC Executive Director Kelly White.

# Five Years in the Making

## Ground Broken on Leatherstocking Natural Gas Project

—BY WARREN HOWELER—

It's a project that has been five years in the making and ground was officially broken Wednesday, May 5 on phase one of a project that is aimed at providing natural gas service to Wyalusing Borough and portions of the township, including the Wyalusing Area School District's Max P. Gannon Campus.

Officials from Leatherstocking Gas Co.—which is undertaking the project—joined together with representatives from the borough, township, the school

district, Bradford County, the state and federal government to celebrate the beginning of this longstanding project.

The first phase of the project will consist of constructing a natural gas gate station and a gas main line from that station, which will serve the school buildings on the Max P. Gannon Campus and businesses on Grovedale Lane.

Work on the first phase is expected to start soon and be completed by August.

Russ Miller, vice president of energy supply and business development for

Leatherstocking, served as the master of ceremonies for Wednesday's ground-breaking ceremony, most of which took place in a tent due to the rainy weather.

"This is an important event for us," Miller noted.

Wyalusing School Superintendent Dr. Jason Bottiglieri described the project as providing for a "greener future for Wyalusing."

"Through our partnership, Leatherstocking is providing an opportunity for not only our district, but for the entire

community," he said. "This has been a vision for a number of years for those involved in the development of this milestone project."

The establishment of natural gas pipeline infrastructure is a significant achievement for the local region "and is a testament to the dedication and commitment for all parties involved, throughout the last few years," said Bottiglieri.

"Natural gas provides economic bene-

See "Project" page A15

## Heckman Resigns As DPW Director

—BY WARREN HOWELER—

Rick Heckman abruptly resigned as the director of public works for Wyalusing Borough on Monday, May 3.

Council members voted later that evening to accept his resignation.

No reason for Heckman's departure was given.

Heckman told the *Rocket-Courier* on Tuesday that he "just decided that the job wasn't the best fit for me."

The borough is currently advertising for applications from individuals who are interested in filling that position.

Heckman, who is a Camp-town resident, is the second person to fill that post since the



Rick Heckman

passing of Dale Grover in September.

Steve Adams began his tenure on Oct. 19, but resigned in December.

Heckman was hired at the Dec. 7 council meeting.

### Feral Cats to Be Trapped

Acting on concerns voiced by three borough residents, council members voted to reinstate its past feral cat trapping

See "Resign" page A16

## Bradford, Susquehanna Lagging in Vaccinations

—BY JAMES LOEWENSTEIN—

Bradford County has one of the highest percentages of residents in the state who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19.

In Bradford County, 68.9 percent of the residents have not had any shots of a COVID-19 vaccine, with only five other counties in the state having a higher percentage, according to the PA Department of Health's website.

In Susquehanna County, 67.0 percent of the residents have not had their COVID-19 vaccination, the ninth highest percentage in the state.

On average, 53.1 percent of

Pennsylvanians have not yet had a COVID-19 shot.

"We are very concerned (about the large number of Bradford County residents who are not vaccinated) as this certainly puts our communities at a higher risk of persistent infections, severe illness and hospitalizations," said Dr. Michael Scalone, director of quality at Guthrie Healthcare. "This risk increases given the expansion of more transmissible variants and relaxation of statewide restrictions on public activities."

There were several factors

See "Lagging" page A16



Photo by David Keeler

Rocket-Courier staff members, from left, Editor Warren Howeler, Sports Editor Pete Hardenstine and Reporter James Loewenstein received Keystone Media Awards for their stories and photos published last year.

## Rocket Writers Earn Keystone Awards

—BY NANCY KEELER—

Three members of the *Rocket-Courier* news team recently learned they were selected as recipients of prestigious Keystone Media Awards presented by the PA News Media Association.

News Editor Warren Howeler, Sports Editor Pete Hardenstine and Reporter James Loewenstein were informed that their stories and photos

from 2020 were selected as award winners in Division VI for weeklies with 6,000 or less circulation.

Howeler won first place in the Feature Story category for his story on the Rock Steady Boxing program entitled "Program Helps Those with Parkinson's Disease."

He also earned second-place honors in the Business or Consumer Story category for his feature "Dairy Prices Beginning

to Rebound from Pandemic Lows;" second place in the Breaking News category for his coverage of a mother who was charged in a DUI accident that claimed the life of her daughter in Susquehanna County, and an honorable mention in the Columns category for his "From the Desk" column.

Hardenstine won first place in Sports Beat Reporting for his

See "Awards" page A7





Photos by David Keeler

Several students from Wyalusing Valley High School joined the dignitaries at Wednesday’s ground-breaking ceremony.

“Project...”

Continued from Page A1

fits that will ensure sustainability and provide cost-savings for our district that benefits our taxpayers and our students,” he said. “This project allows our stakeholders to benefit once again from the service our district provides.”

The event represents a “unique celebration” that will provide financial and employment benefits for the local community, and “couldn’t have come at a better time,” Bottiglieri added.

Leatherstocking CEO Mike German noted that this project has been years in the making.

“We finally brought it to the start line and will start construction shortly,” he said. “It



Mike German

is the result of work by a lot of people in this room and again, what I want to say is thank you.”

German acknowledged several of the Leather-

stocking officials who were in attendance for the ground-breaking—Miller, who is in charge of the overall project; Matt Cook, vice president of operations and customer service, who is overseeing the construction aspect of the endeavor, and Ray Frisbie and Vicky Colby, who will be the local contacts for the company.

“We really want to be in this borough and this township,” he said. “We think this is a good, growing, robust area and we are delighted to be here.”

PA is the number two producer of natural gas in the country, said state Sen. Gene Yaw.

“PA produces about 20 percent of the natural gas used in the United States,” he said. “It is significant. That makes PA one of the largest producers of natural gas in the world.”

Fifty percent of the households in the state, however, do not have access to natural gas, Yaw noted.

“We’re sitting on one of the largest deposits in the world and yet, we don’t do anything or haven’t done anything to really promote the use of natural gas and how do we get it to Pennsylvanians,” he said.

This project was awarded a \$1 million state grant by the Commonwealth Financing Authority, through the state’s Pipeline Investment Program—an initiative that Yaw had a hand in creating.

“I am an advocate of PA energy and more importantly, I am an advocate that the citizens of PA need to take advantage of what we have here,” he



Jason Bottiglieri



Catherine Brown



Daryl Miller



Sophia Alvarez



Fred Keller



Kelly White



Jason Krise



Matt Muench



Suky Burgess



Gene Yaw

said. “We have some tremendous assets in PA and I just think we need to be proud of it, and we need to take advantage of it ourselves.”

U.S. Rep. Fred Keller thanked Leatherstocking for its investment in the region.

“Today, we’re here talking about infrastructure,” he said. “This is a project that meets that definition. It is infrastructure and that is providing energy—not just to individuals, but also to our school district and businesses. When you look at what happens with this investment in infrastructure, the people in the community here are going to be able to realize the savings and the benefits of natural gas.”

The average PA resident, because of the state’s abundance of natural gas, saves about \$1,100 a year on their energy costs, said Keller.

“Now people in our community here are going to be able to realize those savings,” he said. “You’ve got jobs, you’ve got savings and you’ve got investment in our community.”

State Rep. Tina Pickett was unable to attend the ground-breaking event as the House is currently in session.

However, one of her legislative aides, Jason Krise, attended in her stead.

“Rep. Pickett always looks forward to being at events like this, especially with an opportunity to finally utilize the natural gas directly under our feet,” said Krise. “It is about time that we are able to bring that natural gas to use. We thank Leatherstocking and the Wyalusing

School District for getting this project started. It is going to be a great benefit not only to the school district, but to the borough and the township. It is going to be a great economic opportunity as well as certainly a cost-saving measure for the taxpayers and the residents who are going to be able to utilize that.”

Bradford County Commissioner Chairman Daryl Miller, a Wyalusing Valley High School graduate himself, noted that those in attendance at the event were standing within a couple of thousand feet of wells that are producing millions of cubic feet of natural gas a day.

“There’s literally within several miles hundreds of wells that are supplying (natural) gas not only to this area, but also to people around the country,” he said. “PA is now the number two producer (of natural gas), but more importantly, PA is now a net energy export, which was almost unheard of not too long ago.”

This project provides a great opportunity to use the natural gas that is located in the region

to benefit the residents of the area, Miller said.

“How wonderful it is to create the economy and the jobs that are being created because of this transformational exploration of natural gas,” he added.

Wyalusing Township Supervisor Chairman Marvin Meteer was unable to attend the event, but he sent a statement that was read by Greater Wyalusing Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kelly White.

“It is always a good thing to witness history being made and perhaps, while we don’t think of what is happening here as a moment of history, it really is just that,” Meteer wrote. “This ground-breaking is the beginning of something new. It is the beginning of a new era and will open doors for new opportunities for the people of the Greater Wyalusing Valley. You are here to witness the first act to make possible a natural gas distribution system.”

Because natural gas is generally more economical than other energy sources, the people of the local community will soon begin to enjoy the benefits of what oth-

ers have been enjoying for many years, Meteer wrote.

“So, it really is a moment in time that will be, in years to come, part of our history,” he wrote. “Thank you to all those who have worked to make this day possible, especially thank you to Leatherstocking for their commitment to the people and businesses of the Wyalusing Valley.”

Wyalusing Borough Mayor Suky Burgess also thanked Leatherstocking for making this project a reality.

“On behalf of our residents and our council, it gives me great pleasure to say ‘Welcome Leatherstocking to our community,’ and thank you for bringing this incredible natural resource to us,” she said. “Bringing natural gas to our town and surrounding area is no small feat. The abundance of this resource will do nothing but enhance growth in our community. We are extremely grateful to Leatherstocking for including our area in their supply chain. We recognize the huge savings

See “Project” page A16

IN PERSON

HIRING EVENT

May 10th 12pm-5pm

99 Bridge Street  
Tunkhannock

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Sales. See you at Vestal and Wyalusing  
Farmers Market, later in the season