

living lackawanna

Official Newsletter and Report to Lackawanna County Taxpayers

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County to Build Inclusive "Boundless" Playgrounds

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak announce that the Lackawanna County Department of Parks and Recreation will build inclusive playgrounds this spring at three parks: McDade Park in Scranton, McHale Park, formerly Monroe Park, in Dunmore and the Abington Joint Recreation Board facility in South Abington Township.

"These playgrounds will allow every child to gain the proven intellectual, physical and social development benefits of unstructured play," Commissioners Washo and O'Brien said. "We believe that barriers facing children with disabilities must be eliminated. These playgrounds will help children develop respect and acceptance of all individuals despite any perceived disability."

The Commissioners have tapped Boundless Playgrounds Inc., a Connecticut-based, non-profit organization, which has built more than 140 Boundless Playgrounds in 28 states and Canada, to develop the inclusive playgrounds. On inclusive playgrounds, children with and without disabilities can actively play and interact together. Boundless playgrounds also promote intergenerational play. Parents, grandparents and caregivers with disabilities or limited mobility can freely navigate the play area to interact with their children.



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On Boundless Playgrounds:

- Every child can reach the highest play deck
- Play structures are configured to support children's development
- Elevated sand tables and activity panels allow children of all abilities to play together
- Pathways and surfacing are universally accessible
- Equipment like swings and bouncers have back support
- Cozy spots exist where everyone can gather
- Sensory-rich activities let the imagination soar

Commissioners Improve Access to Services



Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak will make it easier for residents to use county government services and gain access to county government information at a Gateway Center now under development at the county's Jefferson Avenue building across the street from the Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel. The center was designed by DX Dempsey Architecture.

Through the Gateway Center, the Commissioners will provide a one-stop shop for residents who want access to government services in downtown Scranton without the inconvenience of navigating the county's scattered offices. It will also assist those who are unsure where to go for various county programs and information. The center will include a public information/help desk, computers to search for county records, a wide array of county forms, copies of county publications, and local tourism and attraction information. Representatives from the county Recorder of Deeds, Register of Wills, Assessment Office, and Department of Planning and Economic Development will also be available.

"When we first arrived in county government, it was clear that county residents were confused about where to go to access county services," Commissioners Washo and O'Brien said. "This is our solution."

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INNOVATION STARTS HERESM
Lackawanna
County

in your corner

Commissioners' Message



Michael J. Washo



Corey D. O'Brien



A.J. Munchak

In our previous Commissioners' Messages, we discussed ways that we are implementing our Innovation Starts Here campaign in Lackawanna County. First, we reported upon our Green Agenda, which covers everything from energy conservation measures within county offices to encouraging greater recycling through increased awareness programs. Already we are reaping the benefits, having lowered the county's energy costs by \$8,520, or 92,400 kilowatt hours, in only one year.

In addition, we allocated \$40,000 for scholarships to The Community Medical College. This pledge is helping the college meet its goal of providing scholarship money to all incoming students in the school's first class. We are supporting this innovative endeavor because of the vast economic impact the college will have on the area and the school's potential to alleviate a critical shortage of physicians in Lackawanna County and across Pennsylvania.

Now, we are moving into discussions for another area of innovation: promoting shared government services among municipal governments so that county residents enjoy the highest possible level of services at the least cost.

We know the price tag for government services is too high. We also realize that providing the wide array of services from code enforcement to police coverage to garbage collection is a strain on municipalities, both large and small. We have begun the conversation with county municipalities and will provide the necessary leadership to overcome obstacles that often derail sharing efforts.

Let us also be clear that we are not working toward merging municipalities. We realize the importance residents place on maintaining their community identity. Any plan that we help to develop will continue to include the strong voice and leadership of local elected officials.

We already have one clear example of how shared services can work. From our state-of-the-art Lackawanna County Communications Center, we currently dispatch police, fire and ambulance services for the county's 40 municipalities. Imagine the implications – both economically and from a service level - if each of those municipalities was still responsible for dispatching their own emergency services.

On February 24, 2009, we convened an intergovernmental cooperation forum that brought together almost 50 municipal and school district representatives from every region of the county. The forum included remarks by Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development Deputy Secretary Ken Klothen, who pledged support for the effort. Other speakers from across the state gave practical presentations on how and where services have been shared successfully. In the coming months, we will hold additional meetings on the topic, including an opportunity for public input.

While we will serve as facilitators, we are asking the local government officials to drive the agenda by articulating their needs and how those needs can be addressed through cooperative agreements with their neighbors. You can help in this effort by encouraging your local government officials to get involved.

Together, we can develop innovative solutions to make Lackawanna County a better place to live, work and play.

innovation starts here

Gertrude Hawk Chocolates



Every time you lick a Ben & Jerry's Phish Food® ice cream cone or bite into a Keebler Chips Deluxe cookie, you are getting a taste of Lackawanna County innovation.

Both treats are possible courtesy of Dunmore-based candy-maker Gertrude Hawk Chocolates, which developed molded chocolate pieces that remain soft at zero degrees and a peanut butter cup able to hold up at 400 degrees. Chairman of the Board David Hawk said it took a year and a half of trial and error to develop the molded chocolate pieces for ice cream. Then the company had to educate ice cream makers on how to use the product. Today, the candy is featured by dairies across the country. The company then moved in the opposite direction with candy able to withstand high temperatures – an equally daunting task that Mr. Hawk and his team were able to overcome.

Gertrude Hawk was started in 1936 by Mr. Hawk's grandmother of the same name. His father took what was essentially a paid hobby and turned it into a business that today employs 250 full time workers and 400 seasonal workers. Mr. Hawk joined the company in 1971. He loves the area and is proud to show it off to businesses considering a move to Lackawanna County.

"This is home," Mr. Hawk said. "I love the people and hundreds of them work here. We just have the greatest workforce in the world."

To learn more about Gertrude Hawk, go to www.gertrudehawkchocolates.com.

in your parks

Upcoming Events

As the warmer weather approaches, the Lackawanna County Parks and Recreation Department is once again planning a host of fun events for the whole family throughout our park system.

The 2009 season kicks off Saturday, May 9 with the Lackawanna County Commissioners' 17th Annual Children's Fishing Derby at McDade Park. There will be two sessions.

The first, for children ages 4 to 8, will run from noon to 2 p.m. with registration at 11:30 a.m. Children ages 9 to 12 are eligible for the second session from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. with registration at 2 p.m. Cost is \$5 per child, which includes refreshments and trophies. No fishing license is required for the youngsters, but they will need to bring their own equipment. Last year's derby brought hundreds of parents and children out to shake off the winter blues and revel in the spring's warmth.

The second weekend in June brings several family events to McDade Park. Come and watch the excitement of regional teams competing in the annual Bocce Tournament on June 13 and 14. On June 14, the park will also host an antique car show and a charity walk.

Once school is out for the year, parents are often left scrambling for low-cost ways to keep their children engaged and active. Lackawanna County is stepping in with two sports clinics. Youth Tennis Clinics for boys and girls ages 8 through 16 will be held June 15 through August 14 at various locations throughout the county. The cost of the clinics is \$10. Call the parks office at 570-963-6764 for more information.



A Youth Soccer Clinic will be held at Merli Sarnoski Park on June 29 through July 2 from 9 a.m. to noon for boys and girls ages 5 through 13. A second Youth Soccer

Clinic for the same age group will be held at McDade Park on July 20 through 24 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Clinics cost \$35 each.

To register, or to obtain additional information on these and other Lackawanna County Parks and Recreation programs, call the parks office at 570-963-6764 or visit the county's web site, www.lackawannacounty.org.

County Develops New Youth Program

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak, in cooperation with Maureen McGuigan, Lackawanna County Deputy Director for Arts and Culture, and William Browning, Lackawanna County Deputy Director for Children and Youth, have partnered with the local arts community to provide youth programs in the areas of arts, recreation, theater, song and stories as a way of bolstering school performance and reducing the chances of at-risk behaviors.



Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo and Corey D. O'Brien, along with Deputy Director of Children and Youth Services William Browning and Deputy Director of Arts and Culture Maureen McGuigan, meet with those who received ARTSS Engage! program grants.

The ARTSS Engage! program was created in response to a desire by Commissioners Washo and O'Brien to provide the county's children and youth with opportunities to engage in the arts. Mr. Browning and Ms. McGuigan developed the final concept, which awarded state-funded grants for afterschool, weekend and summer programs.

The program is open to all county children and youth. Look for information through your area school district, in the local media or online at www.lackawannacounty.org, or contact Ms. McGuigan at 570-963-6590.

Key Dates for Upcoming Primary Election

April 20, 2009, is the last day to register to vote for the May 19, 2009 Municipal Primary Election. The last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot is May 12, 2009, and civilian absentee ballots must be received by the Lackawanna County Department of Elections by May 15, 2009. Voter registration and absentee ballot applications are available at the Department of Elections, 135 Jefferson Ave., Scranton.

For more information, call the Department of Elections at 570-963-6737. Various voting information and forms are also available at www.votespa.com. The state web site includes important dates, voting system demonstrations, polling place locations and more.



Outreach Offices

In order to better deliver county programs in local communities, Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak are establishing Human Services Outreach Offices at community centers throughout the county, starting with a pilot program at the Dunmore Community Center. The offices will offer information to local residents from Veterans' Affairs, Children and Youth Services, the Area Agency on Aging, the Commission on Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Mental Health/Mental Retardation.

"This program will make it easier for residents to access county services directly in their communities," Commissioners Washo and O'Brien said. "It will also provide community centers with additional funding for sustainability through monthly lease payments that will offset their operating expenses."

Recreation and Conservation Grants Available

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak are investing \$500,000 from the Landfill Trust for competitive grants to county municipalities, municipal authorities, and tax-exempt charitable and educational organizations. The money will be used as a local match for state, federal and local funds, with the expectation that the county's investment will generate over \$1.5 million of recreation improvements throughout the county. The Environmental Conservation and Outdoor Recreation grants will be used for

a variety of projects, including acquiring and preserving open space resources; acquiring and building greenways and trails; acquiring, developing or rehabilitating outdoor recreational facilities; preparing master plans for parks and outdoor recreation facilities; preparing open space plans; and updating local land-use ordinances to incorporate environmental design standards.

Grant recipients will be announced in the spring of 2009.

did you know?
Arts & Culture
Lackawanna County awarded \$50,000 in 2009 for 25 individual Arts and Culture grants for projects including photography exhibits, concerts, play productions, arts camps, lectures, dance performances and more.

in the spotlight

Human Resources Professional Named New Chief of Staff

Peckville resident Maria Elkins was a newcomer to government when she joined the Washo & O'Brien administration last year as Deputy Director for Human Resources. Lackawanna County

Commissioners Michael J. Washo and Corey D. O'Brien were so impressed by her performance over the past year that she was tapped as the new Chief of Staff to replace Elizabeth Randol, Ph.D. Dr. Randol left the administration in February to take a high-level position with state Treasurer Rob McCord.



Ms. Elkins brings with her over 16 years of experience in private industry, working at Cinram Manufacturing Inc. in human resources and finance. She holds a BS degree in Business Management and an MS degree in Human Resources Administration, both from the University of Scranton.

"Maria Elkins has been the catalyst for a complete overhaul of the county's Department of Human Resources," Commissioners Washo and O'Brien said. "She has led our efforts to streamline human resources, working to get the most value for the county's dollar while at the same time increasing benefits. Ms. Elkins has also taken a lead role in the county's contract negotiations with four of the county's unions."

One of Ms. Elkins' projects involved contracting AON Consulting to conduct a complete review of county health benefits and to recommend potential cost savings. The review led to a switch in the county's dental carrier that will save approximately \$700,000 over three years. In addition, a change in the county's life insurance carrier will save another \$21,500 annually.

Ms. Elkins also worked to improve the administration of various areas in the Human Resources Department including COBRA, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the overall hiring process, instituting drug testing and background checks.

As she assumes her new role, Ms. Elkins will strive to further refine county policies and procedures.

in your town

New County Park in Development for North Pocono Area

Work begins this spring on Covington Park, which Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak officially designated as a county facility this past fall. The county will invest \$1.3 million from the county's Landfill Trust and the state Growing Greener program for the project. Tentative completion date is spring 2010.

Improvements by the Lackawanna County Parks and Recreation Department include renovating an existing baseball field; developing a new Little League baseball field and a multipurpose field; and creating a basketball court, two playgrounds,



a lake trail, parking areas for 80 cars and a new access road. Park operations will be supported with construction of a main office, maintenance building, restrooms and concession building. The park will also feature new signs, benches and picnic tables.

in our past



The anthracite coal boom in the late 19th Century attracted a wide range of immigrant groups to Lackawanna County whose influence can be seen in our culture today. One example is Jessup and its annual St. Ubaldo's Day Race of the Saints, a tradition brought to the borough by immigrants from Gubbio, Italy.

St. Ubaldo Day, or "Festa dei Ceri," as it is known in Gubbio, is an ethnic festival dating back to 1192, the year St. Ubaldo was canonized. After starting the celebration in 1909, Jessup residents added a parade in 1914, holding the event every year until 1952. The festival was brought back to life in 1976 for Jessup's Centennial celebration. It was held annually until 1990 – attracting crowds of up to 30,000. Celebrations began again in 2000.

The highlight of St. Ubaldo Day is the grand procession in which teams carry ornate wooden statues of Saints Ubaldo, George and Anthony through the hilly streets of Jessup past throngs of people. St. Ubaldo is always the lead saint in the procession, followed by St. George and St. Anthony.

St. Ubaldo Day is held on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. The event attracts many Jessup natives who have moved away from the area and return to participate or to watch the festivities. For more information, visit www.stubaldoday.com or contact the Lackawanna County Convention and Visitors Bureau at 1-800-22-WELCOME.

information

- :: Airport
(570) 602-2000
- :: Adult Probation
(570) 963-6876
- :: Area Agency on Aging
(570) 963-6740
- :: Arts & Culture
(570) 963-6590
- :: Assessors
(570) 963-6728
- :: Child Care
Information Services
(570) 963-6644
- :: Children & Youth
(570) 963-6781
- :: Coal Mine Tour
(570) 963-6463
- :: COLTS
(570) 346-2061
- :: Commissioners' Office
(570) 963-6800
- :: Controller
(570) 963-6726
- :: Coordinated
Transportation
(570) 963-6795
- :: Court Administrator
(570) 963-6773
- :: District Attorney
(570) 963-6717
- :: Domestic Relations
(570) 963-6721
- :: Drug & Alcohol
Commission
(570) 963-6820
- :: Emergency Services
911
- :: Housing Authority
(570) 342-7629
- :: Human Resources
(570) 963-6771
- :: Judicial Records
(570) 963-6723 - Civil
(570) 963-6759 - Criminal
- :: Juvenile Probation
(570) 963-6887
- :: Nursing Home
(570) 489-8611
- :: Parks & Recreation
(570) 963-6764
- :: Penn State
Cooperative Extension
(570) 963-6842
- :: Planning & Economic
Development
(570) 963-6830
- :: PNC Field
(570) 969-2255
- :: Public Defender
(570) 963-6761
- :: Purchasing
(570) 963-6767
- :: Recorder of Deeds
(570) 963-6775
- :: Recycling
(570) 963-2017
- :: Register of Wills
(570) 963-6702
- :: Roads & Bridges
(570) 496-7733
- :: Sheriff
(570) 963-6719
- :: Tax Claims
(570) 963-6734
- :: Toyota Pavilion
(570) 961-9000
- :: Treasurer
(570) 963-6731
- :: Trolley Museum
(570) 963-6590
- :: Veterans' Affairs
(570) 963-6778
- :: Visitors' Bureau
(570) 963-6363
- :: Voter Registration
(570) 963-6737

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Please visit our searchable real estate database
for available buildings and land sites at
www.scrantonplan.com



Click to Rediscover Scranton at
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Lackawanna County Attraction Hours



Lackawanna County Visitors Center and Whistle Stop Shoppe

99 Glenmaura National Boulevard, Scranton
1-800-22-WELCOME
Open daily 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour

McDade Park, Scranton
570-963-6463
Tours daily 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. from April 1
through Nov. 30. Closed Thanksgiving Day.

Electric City Trolley Museum

Cliff Street on the grounds
of the Steamtown National
Historic Site, Scranton
570-963-6590
Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
through October 31. Open Wednesday
through Sunday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
after October 31. Closed Christmas,
New Years Day and Thanksgiving.



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