Earth Day a-oak-k!

Jordynn Haswell, 7, of Ellwood City, tosses a handful of oak leaves on April 21 during Lawrence County Earth Day at Ewing Park in Ellwood City. Story, Page 5.

NEW DINER MAKING DOUGH

By William V. Foley For The Chamber

E L L W O O D C I T Y – The Red Barn Players will take the stage at the Ellwood City Community Plaza and open the 2018 Summer Concert Series at 7 p.m. June 16. The seven-concert series is sponsored by Ellwood City Community Enrichment, a subsidiary of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce.

The free performances will begin at 7 p.m. at the $2.2 million plaza, which opened in 2013. A number of the concerts in 2017 drew crowds estimated at 250 to the plaza.

Brok'n Pic will perform June 23; the Beaver Valley Wind Symphony, July 7; the Hopewell Big Band, July 14; the Allegheny Brass Band, July 21; Wine & Spirits, July 28; and 2nd Avenue Project, Aug. 11.

Visitors can bring their own chairs. Shows will be held in the Lincoln High auditorium in the event of rain.

FINDING OUTER SPACE

Tim and Mary Post are shown April 20 inside the 5,000-square-foot expansion to their T&M Hardware Store at 4 Fountain Ave. in Ellwood City. Story, Page 3.
Finding a home in Ellport
New diner owner seeks ‘classic’ ’50s eatery

By William V. Foley
For The Chamber

ELLPORT – His plan, Sam Whittaker says, is to transform a restaurant at 212 Portersville Road into a “classic ’50s-style diner,” one with a black-and-white checkered floor, vivid colors and a “family-friendly, upbeat and fun environment.”

Whittaker, of Vienna, Ohio, purchased the building in January, opened the Ellport Diner and joined the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce.

“The name,” he said, “just feels right. I want there to be a strong connection to the area. My hope is to build this up into something that will draw customers into Ellport for the businesses around the diner, as well as build a strong customer base for the plans I have for growth and expansion of the diner itself.”

Whittaker began bussing tables at age 14 at a Youngstown restaurant where his mother, Sandy, worked.

“Along the way, I worked for some of the chain restaurants, as well as small private ventures,” he said, adding that in 2001 he opened his first business, Sam’s Pizza Plus, in Niles, Ohio.

Menu to evolve

Cooking, the former tractor-trailer driver of 1 million miles said, “has always been a passion of mine, so I knew some day I’d open another restaurant.”

“As luck and life would have it,” he said, that other restaurant in January became the Ellport Diner, which offers favorites such as The Pizza Burger – “not your typical burger,” the menu reads; The Ellport Diner Diesel Burger – “this monster is a full pound”; and The Knuckle Sandwich – “wrapped in our dough and fried until crispy.”

His dinners of liver and onions, and meatloaf, “get rave reviews,” Whittaker said, as does his spit-roasted gyros and hand-tossed pizza.

“My menu,” Whittaker says, “will be constantly evolving as I discover the wants and needs of my customers.”

That may include the addition of ice cream, a smoker, food delivery, entertainment in his banquet room and, “with my large parking lot,” outdoor events such as a car shows or bike nights.

“I’d like to get together with some local residents to organize other possible events, such as craft shows,” Whittaker says.

The Ellport Diner is open daily from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

“We’re a place where people can hang out for morning coffee, get a bite to eat and socialize,” Whittaker said, “and one that will build up to create fond memories of moments spent with friends and family.”
By William V. Foley
For The Chamber

ELLWOOD CITY
– It’s a typically busy Friday morning at the Ellwood City T&M Hardware, where owners Tim and Mary Post are behind a service counter one minute, and the next, weaving in and out of aisles flanked by shelves so full it is as if they are holding “5 pounds of items in a 2-pound bag,” Tim says.

The Posts are at one moment serving the needs of Brian Schuster, who is seeking to rent tables and chairs for his son’s second birthday party; then those of Doreen Welsh, who is renting a dunk tank; and those of Paul Guerrera, who seeks help in choosing from a selection of industrial cleaners.

T&M’s customer base and offerings have grown alongside the hardware store itself, which in January completed a 5,000-square-foot expansion to its original building at 4 Fountain Ave. in Ellwood City after purchasing and razing two houses on lots to the west.

“Customer response,” Tim says, “has been fantastic. We pride ourselves on listening to our customers to grow and improve our business. This feedback and our dedicated employees drive our growth.”

The Posts purchased their first hardware store in 1991, which marked a turning point for Tim, who had worked since 1979 in the industrial supply business, said the NAFTA agreement of 1988 led to companies moving out of the United States and requiring him to travel more often out of the country.

“Having four young children,” he said, “we decided to buy and build a business. The hardware business sells most of the same products as the industrial supply business, allowing me to use my knowledge and skills without the travel.”

Giving back to Ellwood City
The Posts, members of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, have since opened T&M’s in Harmony in 2004; in East Palestine, Ohio, in 2008; in New Castle in 2010; in Bellevue in 2013; and in Perryville in 2015.

Their addition to the Ellwood City store, inspired by the closing of a Franklin Township competitor in 2016, opened for business in March.

“The addition will allow us to merchandise to make the store easier to shop and add items,” Post says.

The expansion features items used for painting, plumbing and electrical work; tools, hardware and fasteners; lawn and garden equipment such as trimmers, blowers, chainsaws and mowers; housewares and rental items. It also includes gear for fishing, hunting, camping and outdoor living.

The Posts and their 15 employees at the Ellwood City loca-
ELLWOOD CITY – The perfect parade, Scott Golmic says, is a community event in which “everybody in town is either at the parade or in the parade. That means the streets are flooded with people.”

Golmic expects the streets to be flooded at noon on May 28 when the Ellwood City Memorial Day parade steps off and travels down Lawrence Avenue.

“Before living in Ellwood City, when (wife) Caroline and I came back to visit family, it just blows my mind how they were able to shut down the main street in Ellwood City and essentially have the whole town come out to either watch or participate,” said Golmic, volunteer director of Ellwood City’s Memorial Day, Halloween and Christmas parades.

“That’s what makes Ellwood City great. There’s a longstanding tradition of parade participation, and that is awesome. It is an awesome small town.”

The Walk to Honor will continue to be incorporated in the Ellwood City Memorial Day parade, Golmic said of the opportunity for family and friends of military veterans to enlarge a photograph of the service member and hold it while marching.

“That is just a very special way to recognize the number of people in our hometown who have served our country,” Golmic said. “The Walk to Honor is quickly becoming something that is very special for the crowd to see.”
By William V. Foley  
For The Chamber

ELLWOOD CITY — Nourishing the planet with new saplings is important, says Quinn Smith, a 10-year-old Cub Scout, “because they give you some oxygen so that we can live. And breathe.”

Without protecting the Earth, says 9-year-old Abby Johns, “It is going to be hard to be happy.”

“If we didn’t,” adds 12-year-old Rachel Bryson, “the Earth would be just a big pile of garbage. The trees would die. The plants would die. And it just won’t be nice at all. You want to have plants growing, trees, healthy people and no sickness.”

The messages of Lawrence County Earth Day reached young and old and were illustrated by the 600 plastic bags Bag Monster Johnny Dam wore to promote their avoidance, by the costume of coffee filters and powdered sugar bags and butter packages and cupcake wrappers worn by Trashion Show winner Raechell Young, and by the new pet rock clutched by 5-year-old Samantha Bender, of North Sewickley Township.

April 22 marked the 48th anniversary of Earth Day – a day intended to inspire awareness and appreciation for the Earth’s natural environment, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Organizers started Earth Day in response to a massive oil spill in waters near Santa Barbara, Calif., in 1969.

Earth Day is observed by more than 1 billion people in 192 countries in what is believed to be the largest civic-focused day of action in the world, according to earthday.org.

Hundreds of those observers were in Ewing Park on April 21, where 41 vendors – 10 more than the number in the 2017 inaugural event – were featured, as was live entertainment, horse-drawn carriage rides, educational exhibits and the free scotch pine, blue spruce and white dogwood saplings being distributed by members of Troop 806, Ellwood City.

Among those standing in line...
Guests are shown at the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce’s employee appreciation luncheon on April 25 at the Connoquenessing Country Club. The luncheon, sponsored by Leymarie Clark Long, P.C., featured door prizes, a grand prize drawing, a 50-50 raffle and a buffet menu of burgers and chicken sliders, wedding soup, salad and assorted desserts.
Small Town, Big Living

The Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce

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EARTH, From Page 5

to receive a sapling from Quinn, and 12-year-olds Ray Heitzenrater and Matthew Gebhardt, were George Lawton, of New Castle, and Glenda Holsinger, of Ellwood City.

Lawton, who works in Ellwood City, chose two pines and a dogwood; and Holsinger, a dogwood and a blue spruce.

“I am going to plant them in my yard,” Holsinger said. “I am going to take some of my daughter’s ashes, she passed away, and plant them with the trees.”

Her daughter, Anna Holsinger, was 28.

“We have been looking for a tree to plant in her memory.”

The trees, she said, “will be good for the air that we breathe. And for the animals. The wildlife needs somewhere to live. I think we are taking over their population.”

Ellwood City Community Enrichment, a subsidiary of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, staged Lawrence County Earth Day, which, volunteer coordinator Jillian Court said, is growing in popularity.

“The environment is one of the major topics in this day and age,” she said.

See EARTH, Page 8

Samantha Bender, 5, of North Sewickley Township, is shown with a painted rock she found as part of the rocks adventure on April 21 during the second Lawrence County Earth Day in Ellwood City.

E.C. marks Earth Day birthday

Abby Johns, 9, of Ellwood City, has her face painted by Maria Jones, of New Castle, during Earth Day.
“We have one Earth, and we have to take care of it. I hope people come back home from this event and learn things that they can use in their daily lives.”

Bags “choking animals”

Such as avoiding plastic bags, according to Rhonny Dam, who with her husband, Johnny, are environmental activists from New Castle — he wearing 600 plastic bags to represent the average number thrown away by each American in a year, she talking to the curious about his outfit.

“Our message is that these bags are ending up in the environment,” Rhonny said. “Thinking about 600 bags is just a random number in your head. To see them, this many bags at once, it kind of gives more of an impact.

While children were curious as to who was under the bags — “They try to find his face,” Rhonny says — she incorporated her message into her answer: Don’t use plastic bags.

“We try to stick the message in there,” she said. “Once those bags are here, they are here. They are not going away. They are choking animals, ending up in the ocean and they are bad for the recycling plants too.”

“A cross the park, Abby Johns, of Ellwood City, and her 9-year-old friend, Chloe Sant, of Evans City, were having their faces painted; Justin Pigza, of Ellwood City, safety coordinator at INMETCO, was distributing 400 free bags made of plastic bottles; Rachel Bryson was selling pawpaw and persimmon, and Raymond Santillo, executive director of the Ellwood City Area Chamber of Commerce, was taking it all in.

“I see a lot of people walking around, eating hot dogs provided by INMETCO, and vendors in every direction,” Santillo said, all of whom will leave with a message of reduce, re-use and recycle.

“The children are coming away with that message. Save the earth. That’s what every vendor here is about. Each one of them has their own story. The air in this area is fresh. We are blessed. You can smell the leaves, the grass has turned green, the creek is running. In every direction, blessings.”

It was on the Nature Trail along the Connoquenessing Creek where Samantha Bender, 5, of North Sewickley Township, found a painted rock as part of the Earth Day Rocks Adventure.

“Be mindful”

Behind their painted faces were Abby and Chloe, who echoed the messages they heard about conservation.

“I like nature because you get to explore,” Abby said. “And have fun.”

Added Chloe: “I am 9 years old and I like Earth Day because it is the day that you celebrate the place that God made just for you. And I love nature.”

As does Rachel Bryson, of Harmony — particularly pawpaw and persimmon.

“A pawpaw a type of fruit,” she said.

“It kind of tastes like mangos, bananas and pears. Some people say it tastes like blueberries and strawberries. It just depends on what you think it tastes like.”

She hadn’t tried eating persimmon, but, she said, “You have to have a male and a female to produce fruit. It you have just one it won’t produce anything.”

Rachel’s pawpaw and persimmon, and the Scouts’ free saplings, were among the items placed in the free recycled bags being distributed by INMETCO.

“It is important to be conscientious about recycling, from plastic bottles, to everything we consume,” Pigza said. “It is important to make it part of the recycling plan. And it is important to be mindful of keeping our community green and not having everything go to a landfill. We need to be resourceful.”