



Staff photo by Dave Roback

GLOVED GIFTS — Rebecca B. Caplice, vice president-senior loan officer at the Shawmut Bank in Greenfield, adjusts a pair of mittens on the mitten tree at the bank yesterday. The mittens, which are brought in by customers, are distributed by the Quota Club to the needy. The bank has set up the tree for the past 10 years.

Lak's office plans Christmas reception

CHICOPEE — The mayor's office will host its annual Christmas reception next Tuesday.

Civil Defense Director Michael Bissonette, who is helping to organize the party, said the public is invited to stop by Mayor Richard S. Lak's office in City Hall from 2 to 6 p.m.

Food and refreshments will be served, he said.

Last year, about 250 people attended the traditional bash, Bissonette said.

The mayor's office has changed the time and date of the reception from previous years to make it more convenient for partygoers, he said.

"It had been on Christmas Eve but we changed it to accommodate

people's busy schedules," Bissonette said.

The mayor's office is also seeking donations for the Toys For Tots program and the Emergency Food Bank, Bissonette said.

"New toys are preferred but anything in good condition that will brighten a kid's Christmas will be appreciated," he said.

Only non-perishable canned goods should be donated to the Emergency Food Bank, Bissonette said.

More than 100 canned goods have already been left at the mayor's office.

Donations can be brought to the mayor's office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.

Elderly abuse cases rise in Berkshires

By DAVID A. VALLETTE

PITTSFIELD — Elderly abuse cases in the county are on the rise again, but officials at Elder Services of Berkshire County say the rise in cases is the result of increased awareness of the problem and not due to an actual rise in abuse incidents.

The staff of the county's protective services program have investigated 139 reports of suspected abuse or neglect since March, up from 104 for the same period last year, according to Ed Donnelly, supervisor of protective services.

Of the 139 reported, investigation led to 65 confirmed cases requiring action, compared to 51 last year, he said.

"The increase is likely caused by an increased awareness in the community of the availability of protective services for the elderly," Donnelly said.

Frederick H. Whitham, executive director of Elder Services, said yesterday the rise, unlike a prior rise three years ago, bodes well because it means a loosening up and a willingness on the part of people who know or suspect abuse

to report it.

"People are more aware and less reluctant to turn in cases," Whitham said.

The current protective services program is a beefed-up version, with the strengthening due to findings three years ago that the county had a growing need.

"For some reason there was a tremendous rapid growth of abuse cases," it was discovered, giving the county the second highest incidence rate in the state, Whitham said.

The case load increase required that the two part-timer protective services staff be expanded, he recalled.

Now, two full and one half-time equivalent, Whitham said, are on the staff handling cases.

One of the additions is Dermot Sporbett, a former Pittsfield police officer, who is applying investigative experience to abuse reports.

"Dermot's strong background in investigative work and legal issues will be a valuable asset to the protective program," Donnelly said.

The program also involves awareness training for other agencies, with recent training sessions held for visiting nurse associations, police and even drivers who deliver hot meals to the elderly at their homes.

Whitham and Donnelly said they also believe they have settled problems the program was having in the providing of guardianship for protective clients.

The guardianship had been provided by Jewish Family Services in Springfield, but, dissatisfied with that agency's tactics, a new contract has been signed with Northern Berkshire Mental Health.

Whitham said that along with the distance between here and Springfield, Jewish Family Services' techniques were not as warm as the program really needed.

"We feel that independence and rights should be taken away only when absolutely necessary," he said, contending that Jewish Family Services operated differently than that philosophy.

11 charged in drug incidents

By NANCY H. GONTER

HOLYOKE — Eleven people were arrested by city police on drug charges in four separate incidents yesterday, officials said.

Five people, police said, were arrested in a raid at a Spring Street apartment and four people arrested in a South Summer Street apartment block. Two men were arrested in other incidents.

Police went to the first floor left apartment at 10 Spring St. about 1:15 p.m. with a Holyoke District Court search warrant and found a small quantity of heroin and \$300 in cash, said Crime Prevention Bureau Lt. Richard C. Page.

Nitza Merced, 25, of 10 Spring St., Susano DeJesus, 25, of the same address, Luis Rivera, 39, of 48 North Summer St., Carmen Sanchez, 41, of 48 North Summer

St., and Carlos Rivera, 26, of 10 Spring St., were charged with conspiracy to violate the controlled substance act, possession of heroin and possession of heroin with intent to distribute, Page said.

Detectives also found implements for making the drug "crack," a derivative of cocaine, in the apartment, Page said.

Police arrested Maria Hernandez, 24, of 563 South Summer St., for possession of cocaine and possession of cocaine with intent to distribute at her apartment at 8:30 p.m., Page said. Police found nine grams of cocaine in the apartment, he added.

During the 45 minutes police were in the apartment, 25 people came there in an apparent effort to buy cocaine, Page said. Three of those people were arrested, he noted.

Ruth Pszczola, 29, of 1073 Dwight St., was charged with possession of heroin and conspiracy to violate the controlled substance act after she came to the apartment and police found the drug on her person, Page said.

Noe Torres, 37, of 31 Cabot St., was charged with possession of a counterfeit substance with intent to distribute after he came to the apartment with a substance he was selling as cocaine in his possession, Page said.

Jose Burgos, 43, of 351 Chestnut St., Page said, was arrested when he came to the apartment and police found there were two default warrants against him.

CPB detectives arrested Carlos Colon Rivera, 35, of 121 Park St., on charges of possession of cocaine and possession of cocaine

with intent to distribute after they found him dealing drugs from a hallway in his apartment block about 7:15 p.m., Page said.

Police found six packages of cocaine hidden in a hollowed out banister in the hallway, Page added.

Juan Santiago, 29, of 110 Center St., was charged with possession of a counterfeit substance and possession of a counterfeit substance with intent to distribute at about 11:45 a.m., Page said.

Santiago was arrested in front of 51 Cabot St. after he was observed selling a white powder, which police later learned was Tylenol, as cocaine, Page said, adding that when approached by officers Santiago ran and was caught by Officer Harvey Pontz after a short foot chase.

Ex-cop denies molesting children

By CYNTHIA SIMISON

A former auxiliary police officer from Ludlow yesterday denied charges in Hampden Superior Court that he molested six children over the course of the past several years.

Innocent pleas were entered by Robert Minkos, 44, of 132 Pond View Drive, in indictments charging him with 13 counts of indecent assault and battery on a child, four counts of open and gross lewdness and single counts of disseminating obscene material to a minor and exhibiting a minor in a state of nudity.

The charges resulted from an investigation by the Ludlow Police Department and involve allegations stemming from incidents reported to have occurred over the past six years, said Assistant District Attorney Timothy Shugrue.

Minkos resigned from the auxiliary force Aug. 3 following his arrest by Sgt. Kim Ingalls, Shugrue said.

The investigation was sparked by a complaint received by police July 25 from a parent, according to Ingalls. Names of other alleged victims were obtained during the investigation, which is still in progress, the sergeant said.

The charges against Minkos involve incidents reported by six children, boys and girls ranging in age from 7 to 17, Shugrue said.

In one of the incidents, Minkos is charged with taking a nude photograph of one of the children and later showing the picture to the child, Shugrue said.

All of the alleged victims were acquainted with Minkos, the prosecutor said.

Minkos is under a court order to remain away from the children and their families while he awaits prosecution.

Judge Raymond R. Cross agreed to allow Minkos to remain free on his personal recognizance with the stay-away order as a condition of the release.



Staff photo by Don Trepper

SNOW SCRAPER — Tom Bosworth of Lenox cleans snow off the roof yesterday at the Elsie Farar Fashion shop on Route 20 in Lenox where he is employed.

Builders hold on to land in two Williamstown sites

By JOHN HITCHCOCK

WILLIAMSTOWN — Efforts by land preservation agencies to acquire and protect two major parcels here have apparently failed as private developers continue with their own projects.

The Berkshire Natural Resources Council in Pittsfield had assumed that the Purple Mountain Partnership, which had acquired the 1,100-acre Mount Hope Farm in 1985, would sell 650 acres to the state under its Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program.

But George Wislocki, executive director of the council, revealed recently that the group of Williams College graduates had had a change of heart and now plans to preserve the open land through private means.

And Williamstown's Rural Lands Foundation, which had hoped to buy and save the 96-acre Holt Farm at the foot of the Taconic Trail, learned recently that

the land had been purchased by Joan and James MacGregor Burns.

Burns, a retired Williams College professor who won a Pulitzer Prize for his biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt, confirmed that he and his wife plan a seven-lot subdivision on a 58-acre section of the Holt Farm.

Nan Jenks-Jay, executive director of the newly-established foundation, said her group had attempted to buy the Holt land, but was turned down as the Burns family apparently had a prior first refusal agreement.

Both the Berkshire Natural Resources Council and the foundation attempt to buy and preserve choice properties, with the council working mainly through the state preservation program.

The Purple Mountain Partnership bought Mount Hope from August E. Mansker for \$1.64 million. Mansker had purchased the for-

mer Rockefeller family farm from Williams College several years earlier. The PMP gave Williams College approximately 100 acres and several buildings, including the 72-room Elm Tree House Mansion and the partners plan to build about a dozen homes on large lots. The college, in turn, plans to use 13 acres for four building lots.

Jenks-Jay said recently she had been contacted by Robert H. Werbel of the PMP, who was seeking information on preservation of the remaining 650 acres.

Both the Mount Hope and Holt properties command sweeping views of the Mount Greylock Range.

The Holt land, which includes a farm house and some barns, was sold for \$400,000 in May by the estate of Madeleine W. Holt of Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Her late husband, Alfred Holt, was a retired Williams College professor and author.

Planners prod builders on subdivision woes

By DAVID LaCHANCE

WEST SPRINGFIELD — The Planning Board yesterday directed the developers of a planned 32-lot subdivision to work with an engineering firm hired by the town in resolving potential problems with street construction, drainage and the installation of water lines.

Board members also endorsed a suggestion that Continental Cablevision be required to install underground cables in new subdivisions when the streets are built, and agreed to forward their recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

The board dismissed most of the more than 20 potential concerns raised by the engineering firm, the

Maguire Group Inc. of New Britain, Conn., in its review of the planned subdivision, known as Forest Ridge Estates.

The subdivision has been proposed by developers Wilfred Bourque Jr. and Eugene Nannini for 26 acres off High Meadow Road.

Members asked the developers' engineer, David L. Bean, to work with Maguire on other issues, including Maguire's recommendation that a water line be looped to ensure that water pressure will be adequate.

Unless the line is looped back to High Meadow Road, or extended to another line on Edgewood Road, the section may suffer from low water pressure, Maguire's report said.

The board also asked Bean to resolve concerns about the grade of two planned roads at an intersection and the potential for water runoff from a planned cul-de-sac.

Bean said Maguire has not yet completed its review of drainage plans for the subdivision. At a public hearing earlier this month, abutters said they fear the construction would force more runoff onto their properties.

Town Planner Robert Spaulding said several of Maguire's recommendations were dismissed because they were not in line with the town's subdivision regulations.

For example, regulations do not require a developer to show the

proposed location of each house on each lot, or the designation of open space on the site, both recommendations of Maguire.

The board agreed that Continental Cablevision should be required to install underground cables at the time of street construction, to prevent the need to tear up the street at a later time.

"Right now is the time" to impose the requirement, board Vice Chairman Paul T. Cummings said, "because the cable company is negotiating with the selectmen on a 10-year contract." Continental has asked selectmen to extend its license to provide cable television service to the town to the year 2000.

Boy, 9, 'fair' after accident

CHICOPEE — A 9-year-old Artisan Street boy injured in an accident yesterday afternoon was reported in fair condition in the pediatrics ward at Holyoke Hospital last night.

According to police reports, Jeremy Kennison, of 55 Artisan St., received injuries to his left leg when he came in contact with a car operated on Chicopee Street by Tammy Ann Breault, 16, of 157 Shepherd St.

Police said the driver swerved to avoid the boy who reportedly had run into the roadway near Artisan Street. No citations were issued in connection with the mishap which occurred shortly before 3 p.m., police said.

Short-term exchange of students proposed

By KAREN O'BRIEN

WILBRAHAM — A request for a 10-day student exchange program with a high school in France has led the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee to consider the pros and cons of sponsoring overseas travel for students.

School Superintendent J. Brian Halloran recommended Monday night that the committee authorize the visit of 20 to 30 students from France to Minnechaug from March 20 to April 7.

But he advised the committee not to sponsor the visit of Minne-

chaug students to France.

The committee authorized the visit of the students from France, but took no action on whether to sponsor a visit by Minnechaug students.

Halloran said the students could still visit France with a faculty member, but the trip would not be sanctioned by the committee.

Badger said plans are for Minnechaug French students to visit France shortly after school gets out in June. School will be in session in France for one week while the Minnechaug students are there, he said.

Minnechaug French teacher Robert McCarthy previously taught at a high school in France and the exchange would be made with that school, said Badger.

"Your reservations about foreign travel are what?" committee member Mary Ellen Glover asked Halloran.

He said the Westfield School Committee had a bad experience with overseas travel when he was superintendent there a number of years ago.

A group traveled to Spain and ran into a general strike, he said. "The parents felt that because

the School Committee sponsored the trip, it was responsible for reimbursement" of part of the funds they spent, Halloran said.

It was eventually ruled that a general strike was "similar to an act of God" and the committee was not required to reimburse funds, he said.

"You don't think about those kinds of experiences until you've had them. I make a lot of mistakes, but I try not to make them twice," he said.

"How often are you going to run into a general strike?" asked committee member Yorke Phillips.