

Whitemarsh Living

SPRING/SUMMER 2009

To Serve & Protect

Top-Ranking Police Department Cultivates Community Partnerships



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PHOTOS BY: SGT. FRANCIS X. WHEATLEY



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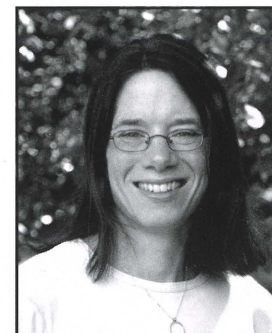
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Whitemarsh Living

SPRING/SUMMER 2009

Dear Whitemarsh Residents:



Public safety is at the core of what we do as a government, and this issue of Whitemarsh Living focuses on those who are on the front lines of protecting our community each and every day.

The 44-member Whitemarsh Township Police Department is a model for police departments throughout the state. In fact, our Department achieved accreditation, making it among the top 5 percent in the Commonwealth.

Under the leadership of Chief Eileen Behr, the Department is making advances in technology and community policing that will enable it to provide services that are better than ever.

In this issue, you'll read about those advances and also meet two of our many standout officers as well as hear from graduates of our popular Citizen's Police Academy.

While we're showcasing our Police Department, it's important to note that public service comes in all forms. With this issue we are kicking off a new feature that will highlight the work of the committees and advisory boards that help keep the Township running smoothly. Given that spring and summer are upon us, there is no better time to take a look at the efforts of our Environmental Advisory Board to keep our Township green.

This issue also celebrates our growing senior population and provides a fun look at several Township programs designed with the active senior in mind.

Get to know the folks at P & I Automotive a little better by reading the Business Spotlight and check out the food feature on the historic Whitemarsh Valley Inn, where prime rib reigns supreme.

And if you're still looking for summer activities for your children, have no fear, there are plenty of last-minute opportunities out there. Check out a few of them on the pages that follow.

Now that the weather is getting warmer and the days are getting longer, I look forward to seeing you out and about in the Township, whether at one of our beautiful parks, on our new walking trails or even at the library where the new director has some big plans.

Wherever your adventures take you this summer, just remember to have fun and please stay safe!

Sincerely,

Sara J. Erlbaum, Chair
Board of Supervisors

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TO SUBMIT STORY IDEAS FOR FUTURE ISSUES OF
WHITEMARSH LIVING, CALL
MICHAEL ZEOCK AT (484) 533-2214.

FOR THE RECORD

The photographs of Erdenheim Farm that appeared in the winter issue of Whitemarsh Living were taken by LandConcepts of Blue Bell.

Environmental Advisory Board Members Volunteer Time, Talent

BY KELLY K. BROWN



PHOTOS BY: KELLY K. BROWN

Environmental Advisory Board members dig into their latest project, planting a native meadowland at Miles Park. Pictured from left to right are Sachiyo Searles; Steve Ziegler, vice chair; Scott Quitel; Bob Bisbing, chair, and Donna W. Constanzi. Not pictured are members Matt Schwartz and Deb Shreero.

On a cold Saturday morning in April, members of the Whitemarsh Township Environmental Advisory Board could be found at Miles Park planting a native meadowland.

Along with other volunteers, they ripped up sod and clumps of muddy soil to make way for native plants that will help control and filter stormwater runoff.

Board member Scott Quitel explained how the significantly deeper root system of the plants, as compared to a conventional lawn, will help create micro-tunnels that trap rainwater.

This "super low maintenance, functioning ecosystem" will also help enrich the soil and attract dragonflies, toads, bats and birds on up the food chain, Quitel, an ecologist, said.

In addition to being a member of the Environmental Advisory Board, Quitel is the East Regional Manager for Applied Ecological Services, with offices in Conshohocken, Pa. The company donated time and talent to create the site plan for and employees volunteered to help implement the plan.



Steve Ziegler, vice chair of the Environmental Advisory Board, volunteers a Saturday to plant a native meadowland at Miles Park.



The seven-member, all volunteer Environmental Advisory Board was founded in 2002. In concert with other Township boards and commissions, the Environmental Advisory Board offered recommendations for:

- Updating the Township's Comprehensive Plan;
- Improving land use planning via "Growing Greener" ordinances;
- Adopting more stringent provisions for stormwater management and riparian corridor protection, and
- Promoting proactive, Township-wide open space preservation.

Virtually all of the Board's recommendations were incorporated into Township ordinances by 2007.

"Whitemarsh is a very forward looking Township," said Bob Bisbing, chairman of the Environmental Advisory Board. "We get a lot of cooperation."

In addition to the project at Miles Park, the Board installed a demonstration native garden at the Township Building. Educational signage is planned for both locations.

Board members also participated in a recent environmental forum in Lower Merion Township hosted by Rep. Mike Gerber. The forum brought together Environmental Advisory Board members and elected officials from seven municipalities and four school

districts to discuss ways local governments can become greener, save money and learn from each other.

Whitemarsh Township Supervisor Leslie Richards praised Bisbing and Board member Matthew Schwartz for their leadership and participation in the forum.

"It made so much sense since the Board's work on issues has a regional impact," Richards said "We were able to share our ideas as well as find areas where we can coordinate our efforts."

Members of the Environmental Advisory Board are residents and volunteers, appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Members serve overlapping three-year terms.

Current members are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Robert Bisbing, Chair | Matthew Schwartz |
| Steven J. Ziegler, Vice-Chair | Sachiyo Searles |
| Donna W. Constanzi | Deborah Shreero |
| Scott Quitel | |

The Environmental Advisory Board meets on the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Township Building. The public is invited to attend. Please check the Township website at www.whitemarshTwp.org to confirm meeting time and location. ■



McCarthy Park undergoes a reforestation with native species.
PHOTO BY KELLY K. BROWN

McCarthy Park Undergoes Tree-Vitalization

BY KELLY K. BROWN

What was once a woodland in danger of being overrun and killed by invasive vines and other non-native plants is now well on its way to being a restored native forest.

More than 750 native trees and shrubs were recently planted on six acres at McCarthy Park, a scenic backdrop for the pedestrian and bicycle trail that runs from the William Jeanes Memorial Library to Colonial Drive and provides a buffer between the Fairway Road neighborhood and the athletic fields of the Colonial School District.

In a cooperative effort between Whitmarsh Township and the Colonial School District, the area is undergoing a major effort to reforest the land with trees that are native to this area.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environment Protection through the TreeVitalize program supplied substantial funding for the project. The Township received a \$36,400 TreeVitalize grant to help re-establish a native tree canopy. Christina Kobland, of Native Return, served as the project manager.

The first phase of the project involved removal of non-native, invasive plants that threaten to kill the beneficial plants. A certified applicator used approved herbicides to spray unwanted plants. Specialized equipment was

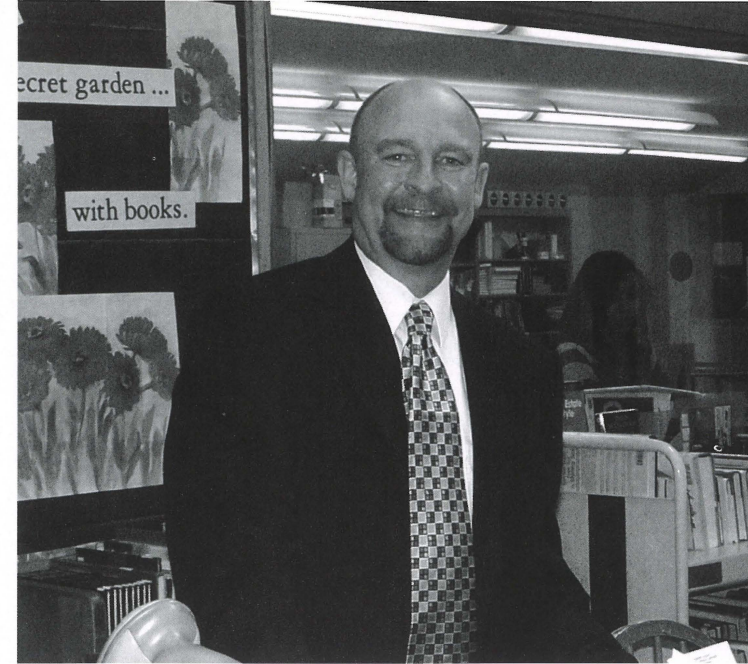
also used to clear out invasive vines. Fallen trees and loose branches were left on site to provide shelter for animals. All of the young plants have been enclosed with tall stakes and protective fencing.

The end result?

A healthy native plant ecosystem that will support the indigenous animal population and naturally help control floodwater. ■

Native Varieties Planted at McCarthy Park

| | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| River Birch | American Holly |
| Black Willow | Silky Dogwood |
| Pin Oak | American Plum |
| Silver Maple | Eastern Redbud |
| Eastern White Pine | |
| Hemlock | |



Gregory Pringle, the new director of William Jeanes Memorial Library, says he's only ever shushed someone once in his 13-year library career.
PHOTO BY: DEBORAH STANISH

William Jeanes Welcomes New Director

BY DOUG HERRSCHAFT

A quiet library is a dysfunctional library.

At least according to Gregory Pringle, the new director of the William Jeanes Memorial Library.

To the native Texan, who was into athletics as a young man and developed an interest in reading mainly through devouring sports oriented books, a library should be a buzzing hub of activity.

To prove his commitment to that view, he says he's only ever shushed someone once in his 13-year library career.

"Clearly, libraries have changed over the years as a result of the ongoing impact of technology," said Pringle. "However, the role of a healthy public library remains what it has always been. It serves as the social, intellectual and cultural nexus of the community and is a place for people to come together to learn, play, educate and entertain themselves."

The excitement of discovery that libraries offer is what enticed Pringle to make them his life's work. After obtaining a Master's in Library Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Pringle soon found work in the San Antonio Public Library reference department. It's been public libraries for Pringle ever since.

"I've always wanted to work in public libraries, rather than academic ones," he said. "There's more diversity in a public library in terms of people and materials. It's about the people, the kids and older people and everyone in between. The diversity is what gives a library its energy."

Library use is soaring in the economic downturn, with circulation numbers up and people becoming more accustomed to borrowing. This provides an opportunity for libraries to show off a bit and entice borrowers with intellectual opportunities they may not find elsewhere.

For instance, Pringle, a film fan, is contemplating a book-to-film program that would include discussion after a movie and is considering hosting a great debate series on current issues.

Pringle is taking over the library as it embarks on an expansion project to meet the needs of modern-day patrons. He will have a definite hand in shaping the library's future.

"We need to make adequate space to browse books," Pringle said, "and to setup computers for such things as instruction on basic computer skills."

"I'd also like to have dedicated spaces for particular groups, such as a teen space or a quiet reading space," Pringle continued. "And, I like the idea of developing inside and outside spaces where people can gather or find some solitude. I love to see people just hanging out at the library."

And people will no doubt see him.

"I believe it is vital for a director to be highly visible both in and outside the building, and am eager to work with staff, the library board and other community leaders," said Pringle. "Perhaps above all, I'm excited about making the acquaintance of everyone coming in and out the door." ■



The Parks and Recreation Department is always seeking new program opportunities such as line dancing.
PHOTO BY: DEBORAH STANISH

Award-Winning Monday Social Brings Busy Seniors Together

BY DEBORAH STANISH

When lifelong Roxborough resident Dyane Westerfer, 69, retired and moved to Whitemarsh Township she was looking for a way to meet new people. She attended a Monday Social at the Parks and Recreation building and has been a participant in senior programming ever since.

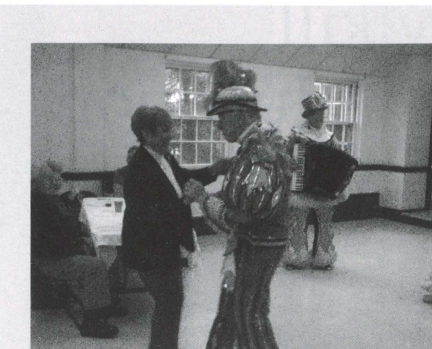
"I was really looking for a way to get out and find out what was going on in my new community, to meet people and get involved," said Westerfer. "A senior group was the first thing I looked for."

Creating a program for seniors has been a challenge, but an undertaking that both the Parks and Recreation Department and residents saw as necessary.

"It became very clear that we needed to address the

needs of our senior population when we were in the process of creating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan," said Doug Knauss, director of Whitemarsh Township Parks and Recreation. "Between steering committee meetings and talking to people involved in the few senior activities we sponsored, we began putting together a new program."

The Township had to take into consideration the recreational needs of an aging population. According to 2000 U.S. Census figures 25 percent of the Township's households had one or more members over 65. Between 1990 and 2000 the Whitemarsh Township senior population increased by 2.6 percent. In addition, within that time period two age-restricted communities were received zoning approval from the Township, further



Left: The Whitemarsh Township Parks and Recreation Department's Monday Social offers a variety of entertainment opportunities, including a visit from the Mummers.

Right: Seniors lend a helping hand at the annual pre-school Spring Fling party.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: PARKS AND RECREATION

highlighting the need for increased senior programming.

Creating a vibrant program to meet the needs of growing senior population fell upon program coordinator Suzanne Guirate.

"I walked in with a lot of preconceptions," she explained. "The first was that seniors were just looking for something to do and offering something like bingo would be a hit. I couldn't have been more wrong."

Guirate quickly realized that today's seniors are a diverse group, more active than ever before who are not looking for something to do, but were looking for something worthwhile to do.

"The hardest part of my job was tying them down," she said. "They're volunteering, they're watching grandchildren, they are young-spirited older adults with busy active lives and they aren't going to sit around waiting for the next bingo game."

Humbled, Guirate began talking to the seniors and soon came up with a program called Leisure Lunch that was mildly successful. Still looking for the hook she needed to entice seniors with a "worthwhile" program, Guirate came up with the idea for the Monday Social by, as she states, "mooshing a number of programs together to come up with winner."

And a winner it was. This year the Monday Social program won the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Societies Excellence in Programming Award. The Monday Social combines a number of activities in one afternoon including entertainment, a catered lunch and a variety of guest speakers on a wide range of topics.

More importantly the Monday Social has become a forum to get input and to test new programming. A recent Tai Chi demonstration spawned a dedicated Senior Tai Chi class and a line dancing demonstration was the driving force behind the new line dancing program.

Elaine Siderio, a 30-year Whitemarsh Township resident and long-time senior program participant, is very clear on what she considers a successful program.

"I want to go out and enjoy myself," said the 70-year-old Siderio. "I worked my whole life and now I want to enjoy things so for me the social events are appealing."

Not content to rest on her laurels, Guirate continues to push the senior programming to meet the needs of an increasingly diversified senior population. Not only are seniors more active than ever, there are many younger "working" seniors that may not have time to come out during the day, but are still interested in socializing.

To that end, Guirate is exploring the idea of introducing a "Whitemarsh After Hours" program that would be a variation of the Monday Social. The program may include appetizers along with entertainment or enrichment programs such as wine tasting or even an introduction to Nintendo Wii.

Even with an award under her belt and new ideas, Guirate continues to be challenged by the ever-changing dynamics of Whitemarsh seniors.

"They are not a homogenous group by any means," said Guirate. "They are looking for different experiences and it's our job to anticipate and meet those needs."

Some, like Siderio, are looking for entertainment while Westerfer would prefer a program with an educational component.

Meeting their needs is a challenge that Guirate looks forward to.

"These are a great group and I've learned a lot from them," she said. "They keep me on my toes, and it's my privilege to help create the very best senior programming that we can." ■

Township Partners With Schuylkill Center to Enhance Community Education Opportunities

BY DEBORAH STANISH



Nestled against the border of Whitemarsh Township is one of Pennsylvania's premiere environmental centers. An oasis of green in a rapidly developing community, the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education is committed to bringing its message of environmental conservation, habitat restoration and wildlife protection to area residents.

Whitemarsh Township Parks and Recreation Department recently partnered with The Schuylkill Center to present a lecture series designed to show residents the basics of greenhouse management as well as eco-friendly gardening and backyard habitat maintenance.

For the Schuylkill Center, the partnership was a natural extension of what it does every day.

"It's important for us to partner with organizations outside of the Schuylkill Center whether it's universities, community volunteers or community organizations," said Fran Lawn, The Schuylkill Center's Director of Land Restoration. "It's a way to build relationships and gives us a chance to pass

on knowledge that will help a community and help residents become more informed citizens and better stewards of their land."

Founded in 1965 when the Smith and Meig families donated 11 acres of agricultural land for the creation of a nature center, the Schuylkill Center has since grown to encompass 340 acres. The grounds feature a variety of habitats including woodlands, meadows, five teaching ponds and wetlands as well as four miles of hiking trails. The Schuylkill Center houses a Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic and an Education Building, which includes laboratories, classrooms, an auditorium, and interactive exhibits. Educational programs, teacher workshops and a vibrant summer camp program help The Schuylkill Center achieve its mission of preserving and improving the natural environment.

While The Schuylkill Center carries a Philadelphia address, it abuts the Whitemarsh Township border and is considered a valuable local resource by residents. When Whitemarsh began looking at reviving the dilapidated greenhouse at Koontz Park and promoting native species in Township landscaping projects, The Schuylkill Center was one of the first places it turned.

"They are an excellent community partner," said Parks and Recreation Director Doug Knauss. "It's turned into a very reciprocal arrangement. Not only are our residents getting the benefit of their knowledge from the lecture series, the attendees have been volunteering at The Schuylkill Center to gain additional experience, which will be of benefit to the Township."

Similar to the Parks and Recreation Department's recent collaborative initiative with Whitemarsh Community Art Center, the creation of the series was based on need and educational opportunities. The series touched on a host of green initiatives including greener lifestyles and medication disposal, worm composting, garden ecology, eco-botany and backyard water gardening. This series was a perfect accompaniment to the earlier greenhouse series sponsored by the Township, said workshop participant Sachiyo Searles.

Searles said that tapping into the extensive resources of The Schuylkill Center was a wonderful opportunity.

(continued on inside back cover)



Campers help with meal time at the Elmwood Park Zoo
PHOTO COURTESY OF: THE ELMWOOD PARK ZOO

Sign Up for Some Summertime Fun

Still looking for summer camp opportunities? It's not too late! There are still plenty of exciting and unique opportunities available right around the corner.

Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education

8480 Hagy's Mill Road, Philadelphia, PA 19128
Phone: (215) 482-7300
www.schuylkillcenter.org

The Schuylkill Center's Nature Ramblers Summer Camp is an environmentally based day camp for children and teens ages 4 through 15. Camp programs give participants the opportunity to explore the natural world through hands-on discoveries, hiking excursions, art experiences, and field trips. Visit the Center's website to view the camp brochure and sign up for some nature fun.

The Highlands Mansion and Gardens

7001 Sheaff Lane, Fort Washington, PA 19034
Phone: (215) 641-2687
www.highlandshistorical.org

This 44-acre site features a late 18th century Georgian Mansion and a two-acre formal garden. Children will get a chance to delve into local history with classes such as Sketching Nature with Pictures and Words; Writing Historical Fiction; and the week-long Summer Fun at the Highlands, a hands-on camp that explores the grounds of the Highlands and helps bring history to life with activities such as digging for lost treasure, gardening and colonial sports. Camp opportunities and registration links are listed on the organization's website.

(continued on back cover)



Whitemarsh PD: Serving and Respecting the Community

BY DOUG HERRSCHAFT

LOOK SHARP. ACT SHARP. BE SHARP.

Every time they head out to their patrol cars, Whitemarsh Police Department officers see those words, inscribed above a door leading to the parking area behind the Township building. They're a little reminder to the officers that the world can change quickly, sometimes dangerously, and that outcomes depend in large measure on how they handle themselves and how well they work as a team. Keep your mind in the game, give your very best effort, and the result will likely be success.

When Eileen Behr took over as chief of the Whitemarsh Police Department in the fall of 2003, though, she inherited an organization that was suffering through both internal and external crises. The Department had tremendous potential but was falling short.

Since then, the 44-member team has turned itself around. In addition to adopting new crime-

fighting technology to bring it into the 21st century, the Department has renewed its effort to build relationships with the community and has earned accreditation from the Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission.

Culture Shift

"When I started, the Department had morale issues and a negative public perception," said Behr. "We had a lot to overcome. I told my senior officers that I wasn't going to do it alone and that I needed their ideas and support to make the changes our police Department needed."

Behr and her senior staff worked together to introduce a community policing philosophy that would serve as the model for the Department's internal and external relationships. The central idea is that by encouraging involvement from all parties, both inside and outside the Department, creative solutions to common problems will be found. Success required one of the hardest things

a leader has to accomplish when trying to bring change to an organization – a shift in the culture.

"Community policing is a mind-set of a police Department," said Behr. "It's not just the job of a handful of officers on a specific unit. All the members of our Department are encouraged and expected to give opinions and ideas. It's a deliberate attempt on our part to promote community within the Police Department."

The approach appears to be working. Behr reports a renewed commitment by both the sworn and civilian members of the Department. There is a strong desire on the part of the members to contribute and be a part of the Department's growing success, to help open the Department to new ideas and approaches to policing. The Department's achievement of state accreditation last year, a project two years in the making, is an example of the teamwork that now defines the Whitemarsh Police Department.

"There were many officers and staff that went above and beyond in their assistance in accomplishing accreditation," said Lt. Michael Beaty. "Everyone was prepared and that is what made accreditation happen."

Members of the Department have come forward to take on additional responsibilities, such as becoming in-house experts on emergency driving, self-defense, first aid and CPR, and traffic accident investigation. The information possessed by these experts filters through the Department by way of seminars conducted by the expert officers, and through on-the-job demonstrations of their knowledge.

Department Goes High Tech

Sgt. Michael O'Doherty, head of the revamped traffic unit, is one example – on a police force that has many – of the type of forward-looking dedication that Behr encourages. A trained accident reconstructionist, O'Doherty enjoys polishing his skills and adding to his cache of high tech toys.

For instance, the Department can now access the information stored in a car's so-called black box, a device installed by some car manufacturers that records speed and braking information in the moments before a collision. The traffic unit also has a laser-equipped measuring device that helps

officers get precise measurements of accident scenes. The measurements are downloaded to a computer, which turns them into a 3D sketch of the accident scene, and can even create a video animation of the accident.

"What I think about when I see this stuff," said O'Doherty, "is how much more accurate this equipment makes our investigations. That's really the point of having it, to make what we do as precise a representation of the actual event as possible."

The Department has also equipped some of its patrol cars with night vision cameras called Noptic, and there are plans to add two new Harley Davidson motorcycles, and a K-9 unit.

An electronic fingerprinting unit called Livescan is also part of the Department's high tech arsenal. The device gives the Police Department an access point to state and federal fingerprint databases, which makes identifying uncooperative subjects as simple as rolling fingerprints on the glass plate on top of the unit. Within minutes, the system searches through thousands of fingerprint files, makes an identification, and, if found, also provides the police with a list of outstanding charges on the suspect. Police can also scan into the system fingerprints found at a crime scene. If the owner of the print has been previously fingerprinted, Livescan will provide his identity. Gone are the days of waiting weeks for an expert fingerprint examiner to work through piles of potential suspects.

Humanizing Police Work

Helping to keep a human face on the Department is Sgt. Francis Wheatley. A 23-year veteran, Wheatley is the Department's first designated community policing officer, an assignment well suited to his personality. Seemingly at ease with anyone, Wheatley is approachable and shows genuine concern for others. After he was hired, Wheatley came to realize that he wanted to work toward changing the authoritarian, tough-guy mind-set of police work to a more people oriented approach.

"It's important to understand and work with people in their actual circumstances," said Wheatley. "It's about forming a bridge between police and the people they serve."

Wheatley is in charge of organizing some popular

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programs the Department has in place to bridge that gap. Cop Camp, the Citizens Police Academy, and the Department's Volunteers in Police Service program are examples of how the Department offers the community a chance to learn how and why police do what they do.

Wheatley also teaches a law seminar to students at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School. The seminar is an upfront, straight talk guide to legal rights and how they play out in real life situations. In the freewheeling class, Wheatley fields questions from students on issues including underage drinking and drug use, and dispenses straightforward answers that often catch the kids off guard.

"These programs give people a much better understanding of police and the role we play," said Wheatley. "It's important for people to know that we're not just here to lock you up. We're here to work with people toward a good outcome. It's about wielding our authority and balancing our enforcement duties with good judgment."

Students from one of Wheatley's recent seminars seemed to get the message. One asked the Sergeant if he had to open the door to his house, if police wanted to come inside because of an underage drinking party. Wheatley answered with a simple no, and went on to explain recent Supreme Court rulings that governed police behavior in similar situations.

"For him to answer truthfully was cool," the student said. "It depends on how you act toward the cop. They're obviously human. They have a job to do to protect us and our safety."

Students said that the seminar and Wheatley taught them how to handle challenging situations better.

Ultimately, this is what the Department's vision of a community oriented policing is all about, bringing police and community together in a common effort to learn how to handle things better.

"The community should know we're approachable for any reason," said Behr, "and we should know the community and its problems. Our job is to serve and respect the community. It's the most important line in our mission statement." ■

Meet Your Police Officers

BY KELLY K. BROWN



Whitemarsh Township Police Sgt. Francis X. Wheatley
PHOTOS BY: KELLY K. BROWN

WHO: Sgt. Francis X. Wheatley, Community Relations Officer

AGE: 46

CHILDHOOD: Grew up in Dresher, Pa. in an Irish Catholic family with nine brothers and sisters. Father passed away when he was just 7. Required to get a job at age 15 and worked all through high school to help family financially.

EDUCATION: Upper Dublin High School, Montgomery County College, St. Joseph's University

FAVORITE TV SHOWS AS A KID: The Rookies, Adam 12. Knew in junior high he wanted to become a police officer. "At that age you don't relate that to your friends."

ALTERNATIVE CAREER PLANS: Mother wanted him to become a priest. Now known as "Father Fran" for his interviewing style and ability to get to the heart of the matter.

FAMILY MAN: Wheatley and his wife, Jeanne, have two sons and a daughter.

KEEPING FIT: An avid runner, Wheatley trains at Valley Green Park or around the neighborhood. A competitor in the annual Sea Isle City 10-mile run every summer.



Whitemarsh Township Police Sgt. Micheal J. O'Doherty

WHO: Sgt. Michael J. O'Doherty, Traffic Safety Unit

AGE: 35

CHILDHOOD: Grew up in Blue Bell, Pa. with parents and sister.

EDUCATION: St. Joseph's University.

IN THE GENES: Father was an FBI agent.

DOUBLE DUTY: Paid his own way through the Police Academy, attending full-time from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. then working 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. as a dispatcher for the Whitpain Police Department.

NO STOPPING HIM: Responsible for stop signs at Barren Hill Road and Hart's Lane after noticing too many accidents at the intersection.

FAMILY MAN: O'Doherty and his wife, Kim, have a son and a daughter.

HAWKS FANS: O'Doherty and Kim met in college. They are devoted Hawks fans and enjoy bringing the children to games.



2008 graduates of the Whitemarsh Township Police Department's Citizen Police Academy.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF: THE WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT

Citizens Police Academy Gets Participants' Adrenalin Pumping

BY DEBORAH STANISH

Jen Etkin, 33, always wondered about the road not taken; Richard Cutler, 51, wanted to know more about the inner workings of his community, and Bill McMenamin, 40, wanted to satisfy a childhood curiosity.

Thanks to the Whitemarsh Township Police Department's Citizen Police Academy they all walked away with a greater appreciation for the work done by the Department, and today are members of the newly established Whitemarsh Volunteers Police Services program, known as VIPS.

"Growing up, I always wanted to be a police officer," said Etkin, "Whenever I thought about a career, being an officer was something I had a definite interest in pursuing."

Instead, Etkin settled into a career in law, taking up the reins as a personal injury attorney. However, because

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Jen Etkin, like many CPA graduates, volunteered her time at Whitemarsh Township Police Department's Cop Camp.

“After going through Citizen’s Police Academy you just can’t walk away. As a resident of a community you step up and help out and I can’t imagine a better way to do so.”

“Having a chance to participate in the Citizen’s Police Academy was a chance to satisfy my curiosity.”

McMenamin was surprised at the intensity of the experience and at how even though the situations were mock scenarios he could still feel his adrenalin pumping.

“It was humbling to think this is what the officers experience every day,” said McMenamin.

Ken Stoudt, 70, and his wife Rosemary, 68, echoed the sentiment.

“You could really feel your heart pounding as you went through the lessons,” said Ken Stoudt.

For Rosemary Stoudt, the experience was personal.

In 1967 while at home with her three small children, she was the victim of an armed robbery. Tied up and threatened with a gun to her chest, she was not only thankful to survive, she was thankful for the Whitemarsh Police officers who supported her during the three-year long ordeal to bring the criminals to justice.

Rosemary decided to join the Academy after her husband completed the class, hoping to gain a better understanding of what police officers go through. While she appreciated the experiences of firearm handling and arrest procedures what she walked away with was an admiration of the officers’ skills and the sobering realization that their life is on the line every day.

“These aren’t guys who became officers because they couldn’t do anything else,” said Rosemary. “They have masters degrees and are highly

skilled and trained. We are lucky to have them and should support them in every way possible.”

Sgt. Francis Wheatley said the Department was taken aback by the popularity of the Citizens Police Academy, which is a valuable education and public relations tool. The enthusiasm and energy brought to the Academy prompted the Department to start the VIPS program.

Etkin, McMenamin, Cutler and Ken Stoudt have all volunteered their time as VIPS.

“The officers have a lot of care and respect for what they do and for the community,” explained Etkin. “After going through the Citizen’s Police Academy you just can’t walk away. As a resident of a community you step up and help out and I can’t imagine a better way to do so.”

of the Whitemarsh Township Citizen’s Police Academy she was able to explore her childhood dream with real, hands-on lessons.

“It was not a sit in a classroom situation,” said Etkin. “We got to really step into the shoes of an officer and learn proper procedures. We got the opportunity to participate in mock arrest situations and were able to assist in an actual DUI checkpoint.”

Created in 2007, the Citizen’s Police Academy is a companion program to the Department’s popular summer Cop Camp for children. Participants in the 10-week Citizen’s Police Academy learn skills ranging from how to approach a car correctly during a traffic stop to how to safely handle firearms. They also develop a deeper understanding of the challenges police officers

face every day.

“These guys walk out of the door every day, kiss their wives and children, and have no idea what the day holds,” said Cutler. “There is no such thing as routine.”

Cutler, a Periodontist, joined the program because he wanted to learn more about the inner workings of his community.

Fellow participant McMenamin joined the program thinking he’d gain a little inside knowledge of police work.

“I grew up watching Adam-12 and was intrigued by the idea of becoming a police officer but as you get older you make choices and end up going in different directions,” said McMenamin.

For more information or to register for the Fall 2009 Citizens Police Academy call (610) 825-6530 or visit www.whitemarshtwp.org.

Classes are held once a week, for 10 weeks from 7 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. at the Police Department and are offered to residents of Whitemarsh Township at no cost. Participants must be age 18 or older and have a valid drivers license. Space is limited, and registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis.



P & I Automotive
627 Ridge Pike
Lafayette Hill
(610) 834-0804

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Closed Saturdays in July and August

Friendly, Funny, Knowledgeable Service Keeps Customers Coming Back to P & I Automotive

BY KELLY K. BROWN

When customers enter the door at P & I Automotive they are welcomed by name. Holiday greetings from regulars hang on the wall, along with awards for outstanding service. The two red settees, reminiscent of old style car bench seats are rarely occupied. This is not a sit-and-wait-for-an oil-change type of garage. Most people drop off their automobile, knowing they are leaving it somewhere they will get an honest evaluation of the necessary work and the job will be performed by an experienced mechanic for a fair price.

P & I Automotive, located on the corner of Ridge Pike and Crescent Avenue, is owned and operated by Drew Pierce and Bob Iezzi. Their front lot starts to fill with cars waiting for service early in the morning. The sign in the window reads “Tourist treated same as Home Folks.” By evening the cars are neatly lined up out front, awaiting pick up.

It’s what happens between 8 a.m. and 5 a.m. that keep them hopping. Fans of the National Public Radio show Car Talk might think of Iezzi and Pierce as the “Click and Clack” of Whitmarsh. Like the radio show hosts, they are friendly, funny and know cars inside and out.

Iezzi, 56, handles the front of the shop – greeting customers, scheduling repairs, locating difficult to find parts. Pierce, 53, the quieter of the two, runs the back of the shop. They also employ a full-time mechanic to assist Pierce with repairs. Iezzi’s wife, Mary Ann, helps in the office part time. She started working there in 1994, with the youngest of their three daughters in tow.

Pierce and Iezzi both grew up in the Conshohocken area, attending Plymouth Whitmarsh High School and Central Montgomery Technical School. They knew each other then through a mutual friend, who is now Pierce’s brother-in-law.



Left: Bob Iezzi, co-owner and co-operator of P & I Automotive. Right: Drew Pierce, co-owner and co-operator of P & I Automotive.

PHOTOS BY: KELLY K. BROWN

In 1984, Pierce and Iezzi were independently investigating properties to open their own auto repair shops. At the time, neither was financially able to start his own business, so they decided to pool their resources and talents to open P & I Automotive.

The business is located in a facility that has been an auto repair shop since 1928. First it was Gilinger’s Garage, operated by Walt Gilinger as a gas station, auto repair shop and the first towing service in the Township. The business was then taken over by Ed Graf and became known as Graf’s Garage.

Pierce worked as a mechanic in Graf’s Garage, starting when gasoline was just 34.9 cents per gallon. Needless to say, that was a number of years ago. Then he and Iezzi purchased the property, which they have operated as an auto repair for the past 25 years.

“This business is like running an emergency room for cars,” said Iezzi. “We get a car in here that is not running right. We have to diagnosis the problem, figure out how to fix it and then locate the parts to do it.”

And it usually has to be done the same day, along with any number of other cars, waiting for their turn to be operated on and returned to their anxious owners.

Pierce has solved many mechanical mysteries over the years, including repairing engine problems caused by squirrels or chipmunks that chewed the wires. His work area reflects the changes in technology over the years. Hand tools rest comfortably next to computers. He notes the importance of regular training to stay up-to-date.

P & I must be doing the job right, based on the number of loyal customers they have, both locals and even former residents who still bring their cars back for service.

“The Best of Philly” Car Repair Award for the 1999 issue of *Philadelphia Magazine* is proudly hung in the shop, along with the accolade for “One of the Areas Top Repair Centers from the 2008” *Delaware Valley Consumers’ Checkbook*.

Even with a typical workweek of 60 hours, Pierce and Iezzi are looking forward to many more years in business.

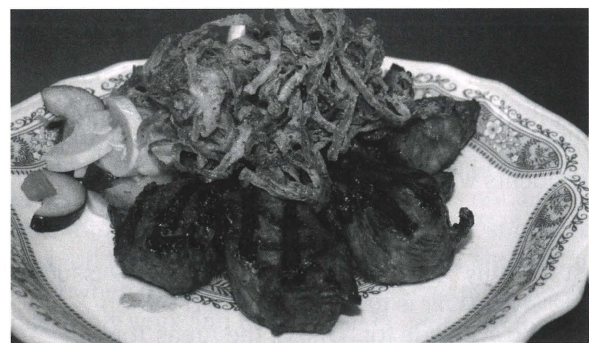
“I hope the next 25 years are even better than the first 25,” said Iezzi. ■

Serving Up Tradition With a Twist at Whitemarsh Valley Inn

BY DEBORAH STANISH



PHOTO BY: DEBORAH STANISH
Gail Leandri, owner of Whitemarsh Valley Inn, with executive Chef Jesus Robles. Thick Cut prime rib is a house specialty.



DETAIL PHOTOS BY: JILL MCGEEHAN



Tradition is important at Whitemarsh Valley Inn. Located at 474 Germantown Pike in Lafayette Hill the historic building is filled with good food, good music and good friends.

The building has a long history in the Township, and since the end of the Prohibition era has been known as a local tavern and gathering place.

The concept of the Whitemarsh Valley Inn was born when Gail Leandri became friends with Jimmy Schweidel, owner of what was then known as the Wooden Nickel Tavern.

"We were really looking for a place to serve good food, the sort of food we liked to eat," said Leandri. "We felt there was a niche for upscale, traditional American food and out of that desire we came up with a concept."

In 1990 the building underwent extensive renovation and reopened in 1991 as the Whitemarsh Valley Inn.

In keeping with the historical nature of the building, Leandri and Schweidel created a rich, colonial décor with deep, wood paneling and indirect picture lighting. The effect is intimate and welcoming. Crafting a menu with the same attention to detail was just as important.

"Our goal was to create a fine-dining menu with quality, traditional foods with an eclectic twist," said Leandri.

Today the restaurant features 45 items, and its dinner menu is renowned for such American classics as prime rib, snapper soup and rack of lamb with prices ranging from \$14 to \$27.

It's not only the food that sets the Whitemarsh Valley Inn apart. From its inception the restaurant has offered music seven nights a week, making it a popular gathering place for friends.

"We wanted to create a cozy, friendly place with excellent food and wonderful entertainment," said Leandri. "We have live music every evening which creates a welcoming atmosphere."

But what keeps people coming back is the food. With a staff of three chefs, including executive chef Jesus Robles, the kitchen is always striving to creatively interpret traditional fare.

"Our food is consistently excellent," said Leandri, as Robles plates a thick slice of prime rib. "We are always looking for the best ingredients so we can offer the best food to our customers."



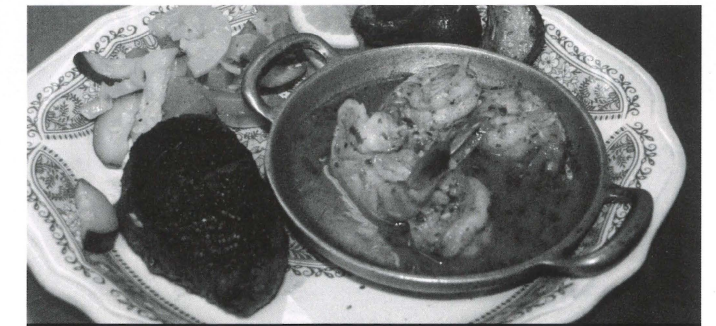
Taking care of her customers is something that Leandri takes very seriously. Growing up in a restaurant family, Leandri took a detour from the restaurant business and became a teacher, retiring

in 1997 after 31 years. Now the sole proprietor of the Whitemarsh Valley Inn, she has come to know her regular customers. When she realized that people were cutting back their restaurant dining due to economic conditions she instituted a "recession menu" with dinner options at \$10.

"We had people who would come in four or five nights a week," explained Leandri. "By offering a lower price menu dining out isn't something our customers have to sacrifice."

Featuring such comfort food as shepherds pie, fried scallops and linguine with meatballs, the recession menu offers five rotating items daily.

"We saw a need and tried to fill it," said Leandri. "It just makes sense to take care of your customers. We're a place that people want to come back to and in the restaurant business, you can't ask for better than that." ■



Whitemarsh Valley Inn
474 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444
610-941-0555

The Whitemarsh Valley Inn is open seven days a week. Lunch is served from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Dinner is served 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and from 4 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Sunday. A menu-item brunch is served on Sunday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Live entertainment is offered every evening beginning at 7:30 p.m.

For more information or reservations contact the Whitemarsh Valley Inn at 610-941-0555 or visit its website at www.whitemarshvalleyinn.com.

Whitemarsh Valley Inn Once an Odd Fellows Meeting Place

BY DEBORAH STANISH

In 1853 the three-story building known today as the Whitemarsh Valley Inn was built as the Marble Hall Lodge of the Odd Fellows, a charitable fraternal organization with roots going back to early 18th century England.

Established in America in the early 19th century, The Odd Fellows continued their work of offering social opportunities and charitable giving. Because of their closed membership and organizational rites, they were considered a "secret society" and regarded with suspicion in some quarters. History says that because of these feelings The Marble Hall Lodge was constructed to blend in seamlessly with other structures on Germantown Pike.

The building originally contained two floors of dwellings with the Odd Fellows meeting hall taking up the third

floor. The building served as the Odd Fellows Lodge from 1853 until 1925. After the end of Prohibition, the two dwellings were converted into one space and became a tavern, known as The Marble Hall Inn. In 1971 the space underwent another transformation and became known as The Wooden Nickel Tavern.

In 1990 the building underwent extensive renovations and opened in 1991 as the Whitemarsh Valley Inn. Today the talk at the Inn is of prime rib and racks of lamb but a little bit of history is still preserved: the Odd Fellows meeting hall – though no longer in use – still remains intact and unchanged on the third floor of the Whitemarsh Valley Inn. ■



PHOTO BY: KELLY K. BROWN

Linda Doll, Ready To Pitch In

BY KELLY K. BROWN

Whether she is assisting with a youth book sale at the William Jeanes Memorial Library on a Saturday morning or helping raise money for the High School Band or attending a Post Prom Committee meeting, Linda Doll is ready to pitch in.

A Lafayette Hill resident since 1986, Doll and her husband, Thomas, have two sons; Steven, 17, a junior at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School and David, 13, an 8th grader at Colonial Middle School.

Q. Other than your full time job as a parent, do you do other work?

A. Couldn't possibly! My kids still come first. Volunteering gives me the flexibility. I want to be there for my kids.

Q. Where do you volunteer?

A. Here's my schedule. On Monday and Tuesday mornings I'm at Whitemarsh Elementary School helping in kindergarten. Wednesday mornings I'm at Colonial Elementary. Thursday is Conshohocken Elementary School. Fridays I reserve for make-ups. I figure they are counting on me and if there is an assembly or testing or some other reason I can't volunteer on my regular day, I make the time up on Friday.

And of course, I volunteer at my own kids' schools.

Q. Did you volunteer as a child?

A. I did. My mom always did. She dragged me along. So I started helping out. The carnival was my favorite. The four years I was in college I coached a girls' softball team. The girls were 12 to 14 years old. It was the same team that I played on when I was that age.

Q. Do your children help you with your volunteer activities?

A. I get the kids to volunteer. I don't think they appreciate it right now. Sometimes I can tell if it made an impact. If one of them is feeling down, I'll ask: "Why don't you see if you can do something to make someone else happy." And it works.

Q. Do you see paid work in your future?

A. I'm just fortunate that Tom has a good job and I can do this. This is my contribution. I totally believe in the "It takes a village" concept. Money has never really been a motivator for me. I need to know I'm making a difference.

I always wanted to be a teacher, but my dad said that I wouldn't make enough money. So I majored in business. I was good at it, but it wasn't what I wanted to do. Now I'm doing what I want to do.

People are always telling me I should get a job. I'm not going to make that mistake again. This way I just do the fun stuff.

Q. What do you like to do to relax?

I think my passion is travel. I see travel in our retirement years. Tom will go any place there's a golf course!

Township Partners With Schuylkill Center
(continued from page 8)



The Schuylkill Environmental Center for Education is located at 8480 Hagy's Mill Road.

For more information about The Schuylkill Center call 215-482-7300 or visit its website at www.schuylkillcenter.org.

Interactive exhibits and hands-on learning are featured at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education.

PHOTO BY: DEBORAH STANISH

"Our goal is to help people at all age levels become more involved in their own communities and to give them the tools they need to make good choices."

"The series was very pertinent to anyone interested in preserving our local habitats and learning how important native plants are to our ecology," she said. "The expertise and resources they brought were wonderful."

As a member of the Township's fledgling Greenhouse Committee, Searles was so inspired by the work of The Schuylkill Center she has since become a member of The Schuylkill Center's Education Committee.

"I was so enthusiastic about the variety and quality of programs The Schuylkill Center offered I was recruited by one of the board members to help get the word out about what a jewel we have in The Schuylkill Center," said Searles.

A jewel, as in "hidden gem", is a label often assigned to the facility and is something that The Schuylkill Center's communications manager, Lisa Sonneborn, is working hard to change.

"People are astounded when they come to The Schuylkill Center. The grounds alone are stunning but what sets us apart is the quality of programming that we bring to the Philadelphia suburbs," she said. "We are relevant to the community and bring programming topics that are of interest today.

Lawn agreed.

"Environmental programming has changed over the years and issues have become more complex," Lawn

said. "We're able to break some of that down and offer pertinent education that educates and gives people real solutions and opportunities to change their world, often, as is the case with our Citizen's Science program, at no cost."

Citizen's Science, which addresses such environmental issues as eating locally, green transportation and sustainable landscaping, is only one way in which The Schuylkill Center seeks to inform and educate. In addition to the summer camp and teacher workshops, they offer year-round, age-appropriate children's programs, bird walks, lecture series on a host of environmental topics, hiking programs, nature-themed trip opportunities as well as special programs for homeschooling families.

In 2002 The Schuylkill Center took another step in environmental education by partnering with The Green Woods Charter School to open an on-site kindergarten through grade 8 school. Together they developed a curriculum using an environmental education model

"All these programs and opportunities tie-in together," said Lawn. "Our goal is to help people at all age levels become more involved in their own communities and to give them the tools they need to make good choices. We are right over the line from Whitemarsh Township and supporting the programs and decisions they are making supports what we are doing here at The Schuylkill Center." ■

Whitemarsh Township
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

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Sign Up for Some Summertime Fun!

See page 9 for more summer fun!



Elmwood Park Zoo

1661 Harding Boulevard, Norristown PA, 19401
(610) 277-3825
www.elmwoodparkzoo.org

If your child loves animals, Elmwood Park Zoo has the camp for you. Children ages 6 through 9 will have the opportunity to become a Junior Zookeeper; learn about Pennsylvania's wildlife or investigate who are the biggest, fastest and strongest in Animal Champions Camp. Children ages 10 through 13 will get a behind-the-scenes look at the operations of the zoo with an opportunity for hands-on experience in the Zoo Crew camp. The camp brochure and registration form is available on the zoo's website.

Whitemarsh Township Park & Recreation Department

4021 Joshua Road, Lafayette Hill, PA 19444
(610) 828-7276
www.whitemarshparks.org

It's not too late to join in on some close-to-home fun. Weekly camp opportunities are still available including a variety of weekly sports camps, pony camp and dance camp. Registration may be completed online or via phone.

Rock Climbing is one of many opportunities offered at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education's summer camp program.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SCHUYLKILL CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION