



Cranberrytoday

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2009 WINTER EDITION

Cranberry's 2009 Budget Provides No Tax Increase

With volatility in the nation's economy hitting levels which haven't been seen for decades, Township officials are being cautious about Cranberry's 2009 budget.

"It's kind of a maintenance year – trying to keep the level of services the same," Cranberry's Finance Director Vanessa Gleason observed. "You won't find any massive new projects in this year's budget, but you won't find any being dropped, either."

At their meeting on December 18, the Township's Board of Supervisors approved a \$31.3 million budget for 2009 that included no changes in the amount of real estate tax homeowners would pay. A technical change in the county's assessment ratio – from 75 percent

to 100 percent of each property's assessed value – was offset by a corresponding reduction in the millage charged to Cranberry residents, resulting in a zero tax increase. Sewer and water service rates remain unchanged and trash collection increases averaged \$1.43 a month per household, a combination of cart price increases and reduced state aid.

"We're looking for modest growth in revenue next year," Gleason said. "We have a 98 percent collection rate on property tax, so we aren't too worried about that. But we will closely monitor the Business Privilege/Mercantile tax and the Earned Income Tax and the Real Estate Transfer Tax." A steep drop in local building activity and the municipal permit

Continued on page 15.

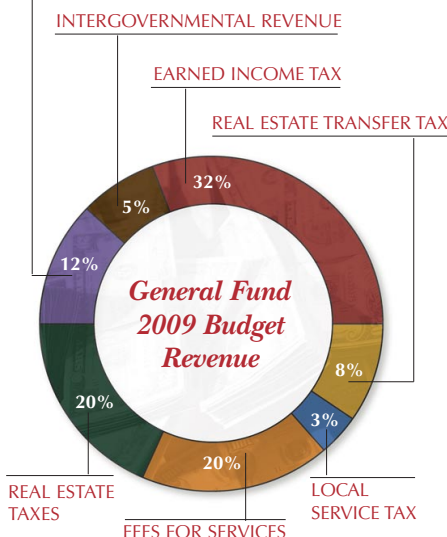
"You won't find any massive new projects in this year's budget, but you won't find any being dropped, either."



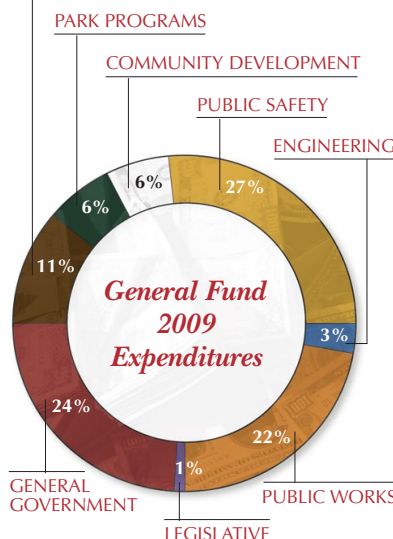
Numbers game. Cranberry Township's Finance Director Vanessa Gleason is making sure municipal revenues and expenses stay in line during a time of real uncertainty.

2009 Cranberry's Projected Revenues And Expenses

BUSINESS PRIVILEGE/MERCANTILE TAX



PUBLIC FACILITY DEBT SERVICE



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Street Naming Auction Raises Money, Visibility For CTCC

Cranberry Township's Community Chest – the previously obscure charity devoted to raising money for local nonprofit organizations – now has a national profile as well as a few thousand more dollars to work with. Both grew out of CTCC president Bruce Mazzoni's innovative idea for auctioning naming rights to a street in the upscale Park Place traditional neighborhood development, currently under construction.

Mazzoni presented his idea – which had been inspired by an eBay auction for a bridesmaid's role at a stranger's wedding this past summer – to Creative Real Estate Development Corporation, the company behind the Park Place project. But instead of allowing one street to be entered into the auction as Mazzoni had requested, CREDCO Executive VP Eric Lamm offered three.

When the story got out – initially on the front page of the Post-Gazette and then quickly picked up by United Press International, Fox News, Yahoo, Good Morning



America and other national media in addition to several overseas wire services – it immediately drew favorable attention to both the Township, the CTCC, and to Park Place.

It also attracted the attention of prospective bidders whose choices of names would be immortalized on street signs in the neighborhood, starting this year.

John McClymonds, owner of the Cranberry Supply Company and a longtime supporter of local projects, liked the cause which the auction represented. He also wanted to honor his mother Dorie and his late mother-in-law, Theda. So with help from his daughter-in-law, and just ten minutes left in the ten-day auction, he jumped in, only to find that his offers for Street A – the longest and most prominent of the three – were immediately outbid. So he quickly moved over to Street B where, after entering several bids, he found himself the winner at \$1,325. If okayed by the developer, the Township and Butler 911 – all of whom are part of the approval process – Theda Dorie Drive will

become a permanent address in Cranberry Township.

Cranberry native Leslie Leumann rarely picks up a newspaper. But she saw a copy of the Cranberry Eagle at her parent's home with the auction story on its front page. Less than two years earlier, her 23-year old son Lee Boss, a pilot, had been killed in a motorcycle accident in Atlanta, where his family had moved some years earlier, before Leumann's return to Cranberry. As a boy, Lee had ridden dirt bikes on the property where Park Place is being built today. Although a memorial had been held for him in Atlanta, there had been none in Cranberry. So in the final hours of the auction, she decided to place her winning bid of \$1,305 for Street C. She proposes naming the street Capt. Lee Boss Way.

The most prominent of the three streets up for auction in the plan, Street A, was snapped up by the Eat 'n Park restaurant group which had learned about it from the Post-Gazette's story. With its newly remodeled restaurant on Rt. 19 just to the south of Cranberry, and a presence in Butler County since

1971, Company spokesman Kevin O'Connell said that Eat 'n Park not only saw the auction as a good cause, but also as a light-hearted way to promote the company brand. So for a winning bid of \$3,350, the Park Place development's Main Street could henceforth be known as Smiley Cookie Lane. ~



It immediately drew favorable attention to both the Township, the CTCC, and to Park Place. It also attracted the attention of prospective bidders.



Long Range Plan Nears Long-Awaited Conclusion

After three years, dozens of public meetings and countless hundreds of staff hours, the 25-year Cranberry Plan is nearing its final stage.

“Right now we’re wrapping up the Growth Management Plan phase,” according to Chief Strategic Planning Officer John Trant, Jr. “We’ve taken the input collected over several years and formulated hundreds of recommendations which the Citizens Advisory Panel worked on. We used their work to develop recommendations and prioritize them. Then we folded them into a draft plan document which was distributed to CAP members during December.

“Also during this November and December, we collected input from surrounding municipalities and

other interested stakeholders,” Trant said. “We’ll follow up by getting their input on the draft plan itself and its recommendations.”

Once that input to the preliminary version is in hand, a final draft will be taken to the Planning Advisory Commission early this year. The Planning Advisory Commission will then hold a public meeting for formal review of the plan document and then make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for adoption in March or April.

“Once it’s adopted, we’ll be rolling through the recommendations. And we anticipate engaging several

of the CAP groups in certain projects,” Trant said. “A lot of folks have expressed interest in continuing to participate in guiding the future of the Township, and the Township certainly welcomes that participation.”

With the Township’s planning process already on a roll, Trant sees the effort continuing to press forward.

“We don’t want to lose momentum,” he said. “There’s a great momentum that was built by the CAP and we want to keep that going. We will be immediately getting into initiatives to implement the plan’s recommendations.” ~



“There’s a great momentum and we want to keep that going.”

A tip of the CAP to:

Cheri Armitage

Susan Balla

Ed Beatty

Tom Bice

Richard Bingham

Chris Border

Teresa Canada

Chuck Caputy

Randy Carper

Tim Casey

Matt Clark

Richard Collins

Rick Colonello

Vic Conrad

Paul Crocker

Robert Gillenberger

Larry Ehret

Randy Elder

Garth Ericson

David Folker

Roy Hurd

Terry Jewell

Mark Kantrowitz

Caroline Kibby

Dave Kovach

George Long

Wendy Lydon

James Lynskey

Shirley Mahr

Tony Manes

Shane McGoey

Frank Monikowski

James Moreland

Duke Nazar

Herb Oliver

Dan Page

Fred Peterson

John Phillips

Vince Profeta

Waldo Rall

Ann Reale

Ray Renyck

Tina Rombach

Susan Rusnak

Jan Stevens

Michael Streib

Cindy Tananis

Gloria Tubridy

Roy Wagner

Dave Weber

Dan Wisniewski

Meredith Wolfe

James Wood

Gong Zhang

Make Yourself Heard At Board Meetings

Every meeting of Cranberry's governing Board of Supervisors is advertised ahead of time and is open to the public. That's the law in Pennsylvania. Not only that, every meeting includes an opportunity for visitors – residents and non-residents alike – to comment on any item, whether it's on or off the official agenda.

But to get the most out of participating in a Township Board meeting, it helps to come prepared – both by understanding the issue you plan to address and by knowing how the Board's meetings are organized. Here are some useful guidelines:

Meeting Schedule. The Board of Supervisors normally meets twice a month, usually on Thursday evenings beginning at 6:30. The first Thursday of the month is its Regular Business Meeting where the Board votes on various agenda items. The last Thursday of the month is its Agenda Preparation Meeting where the Board determines which items will be ready for legislative action at their Regular meeting the following week. Meeting times can be changed, but only with advance public notice advertised in the Butler Eagle and on the Township's website.

Meeting Composition. The Board of Supervisors includes five elected members; at least three must be present for the Board to transact business. In addition, meetings are normally attended by various Township employees including its Manager, Assistant Managers, Engineer, Planning Officer, and different department heads as well as its solicitor – an attorney who

counsels the Board on legal and procedural matters. If one or more hearings have been scheduled to receive public comment on a specific matter, such as a proposed zoning variance, speakers will be sworn in and a stenographer will record their comments.

Public Comment.

A period for comments from individuals concerning any matter, on or off the agenda, begins immediately after

a Board meeting is called to order. Raise your hand and you will be recognized by the Board Chairman. Address the Board, not the audience; this is the Board member's opportunity to hear you directly speaking about the issues that matter to you. The Board welcomes your thoughts, ideas and questions. But please be aware that this is not a Q&A session; it is unrealistic to provide thorough answers to all questions in such a brief time. However all questions directed to the Board will receive a follow-up response as soon as possible after the meeting. But you don't need to wait for a Board meeting to ask questions; residents are encouraged to call the Township office at any time.

Group Comments.

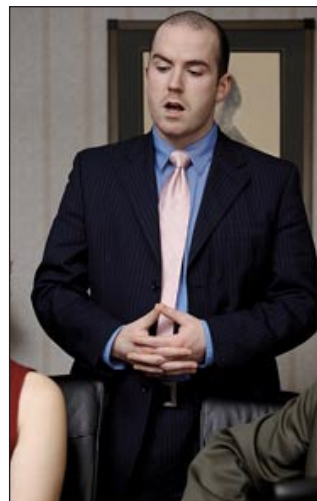
If you come to the Board meeting as part of a group that shares the same concern, organize your group's comments ahead of time so that you have one spokesperson. If more than one person needs to speak, make sure they don't end up repeating what another



group member has already said. Wait until the Board Chairman recognizes you before speaking, then identify yourself and speak clearly so that your comments will be heard. Even if you are upset or angry, try to remain calm and give a thoughtful presentation; remarks that come across as a rant do not earn anyone's serious attention. Do not applaud or boo or attempt to intimidate other speakers who have a different point of view.

Prepare Yourself. If you plan to attend a Board meeting to address a concern, it helps to do some advance work. Check the Township's website to verify the meeting time and see what's on the current agenda; check again on the day of the meeting; sometimes things change. Take the time to nail down the facts and relevant background about the issue you want to address so that

your point of view comes across effectively. You are welcome to bring your notes along. Brevity is always appreciated; keep in mind the limited time available to complete the Board's business. You are also free to leave the meeting at any time after presenting your comments. ~



Work Is About To Begin On Ehrman-Garvin Connector

Rough construction – the initial earthmoving phase in building the 1,850-foot road which will connect Ehrman and Garvin Roads in Cranberry’s northeastern corner – is about to begin, in partnership with the developer of a housing plan adjacent to the project.

Part of the Township’s agreement with Singer Construction, the developer of the nearby Mystic Ridge plan of homes, was that instead of making a financial contribution to Cranberry for roadway improvements – part of the Township’s standard requirement is that developers improve any roads along their property to meet current standards – he could provide an equivalent value in grading work for the new road connector.

“In lieu of their actually widening Garvin Road, we’re taking what that would have cost and translating it into earthwork and stormwater work for the connector,” Township Engineer Jason Kratsas explained. They’re getting ready to start rough grading for their own development.

And as soon as we get the remaining rights of way issues resolved, they’ll be able to start rough grading for the connector as well.”

Although winter is not a traditional construction season in Cranberry, work can actually continue as long as dirt keeps moving efficiently. If it became too frozen or too sloppy, the project would have to be suspended. “They could be working all the way

through if they have a mild winter,” Kratsas said. “But if we have typical December-January-February weather, they could be shutting down sooner.”

Additional funding for the connector will come from the Township’s traffic impact fee

program. “The developer can do the earthwork for much less than we would be able to contract it out for,” Kratsas pointed out. “So this is really a great partnership in that his earthmoving equipment is right there. He can just roll the grading of our road project in with his land development.”

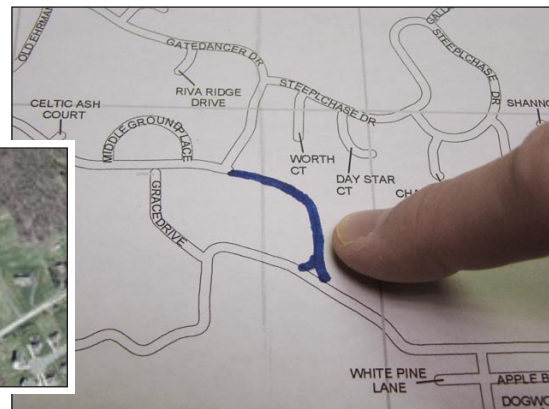
Planning for the new connector actually began a number of years

ago. “It’s been a long project, but it should be done by next summer,” he said. “The original cost estimates were \$500,000. But that was with us bidding out the earthwork and stormwater work instead of having a developer using his own workforce to do it. Now we’ll probably be into the \$200-300,000 range for roadwork. So we found significant savings through this partnership.”

An adjacent traffic calming project in the Ehrman Farms plan uses median islands and other features to slow the additional traffic which the new connector road is designed to handle.

The new connector forms part of a larger plan to create a secondary network of east-west and north-south roadways within the Township. It will, for example, give residents of Ehrman Farms access to Franklin Road; today there’s no easy way to get there. And it creates parallel connections to spread out the traffic on the Township’s main thoroughfares. The connector is part of a transportation plan which has been in place since the late 1990s. ~

The missing link. The inked-in line connecting Ehrman Road, above and left, to Garvin Road, below and right, will become a real street later this year, easing travel in Cranberry’s fast-growing northeastern quadrant.



Playing In Traffic: Gamesmanship Along 228

by John Skorupan, Supervisor, Cranberry Township



If you've been here for a while, you'll remember when state route 228 was a two-lane rural road.

Today, at least

in Cranberry, it's a four-lane highway with added turning lanes and median planters and synchronized signals to handle all the traffic. So what do you guess it cost PennDOT to make all those improvements? The answer: zero.

Essentially everything you see now on 228 east of I-79 was developed by Mine Safety Appliance, Cranberry Woods and Creative Real Estate Development Company, along with the Township. That's because twelve years ago, we had a vision of creating the infrastructure that could support a world-class business park in Cranberry Woods – one which would attract and retain the knowledge industries of the future. We stuck to that plan and were eventually able to put it in place without state money. It was a huge success. Today, the businesses along that corridor generate millions of tax dollars that go into state and federal coffers.

Six years ago, PennDOT began a process to expand 228 all the way from Rt. 19 to Rt. 8. Then in 2007, Westinghouse announced that one of the nation's most significant economic development projects was going to happen right here in Cranberry with the construction of their new engineering campus and

world headquarters. Their decision validated the Township's strategic plans for the 228 corridor.

Based on PennDOT studies and their own discussions with state agencies, Westinghouse came to believe that 228 would be improved well beyond Cranberry. As a result, private individuals, businesses, and builders from Seven Fields to Middlesex began making their own plans accordingly.

But over time, cost creep and competing priorities eroded the state's original commitment including, in particular, improvements to the Cranberry portion of the highway.

In the meantime, Westinghouse announced they will be growing beyond their original expectations. In addition to the 3,500 employees the company originally said were coming to the Township, they now anticipate 800 more. However, without improvements to the corridor, they will consider putting those jobs elsewhere – most likely in the Carolinas, which so actively recruited them to move there in the first place.

We can certainly understand the growing pressure on state resources. But the fact remains that this is an outstanding investment opportunity – one whose cost would be returned many times over through additional

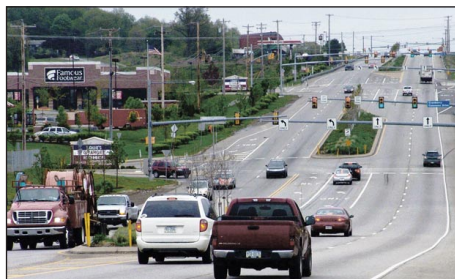
tax revenues resulting from the creation of high-paying jobs along that corridor.

Investing in the Rt. 228 corridor makes especially good business sense now that the overall economy is in trouble; with Westinghouse planning to bring in thousands of attractive new jobs, and Simon Properties and Creative Real Estate Development working to bring in thousands more, it would be very shortsighted not to seize that opportunity. So even though Pennsylvania's economy is slow overall, ours happens to be growing. As a result, the state as a whole would benefit from betting on the future right here in Cranberry.

Perhaps, in time, the various 228 stakeholders will see it in their self-interest to find a solution, and it may not be the same sweet deal for PennDOT that it was before. Of course, we realize there may be a certain amount of gamesmanship going on right now. But it's a high-risk game. How much longer can these companies wait to invest in the corridor? How patient can Westinghouse be before deciding to take jobs down to South Carolina?

We just don't know. And frankly, we may not find out until it's too late.

But we hope our region's leaders will find solutions quickly so that we won't need to learn the hard way. And we ask everyone else to lend them a hand in doing so. ~



This is an outstanding investment opportunity – one whose cost would be returned many times over. It would be very shortsighted not to seize that opportunity.

You can reach John Skorupan at: john.skorupan@cranberrytownship.org

SUPERVISOR'S COMMENTARY

Crunch Time

Cranberry Fires Up Solar-Powered Cardboard Compactor

A lot of cardboard boxes get thrown out in Cranberry – and that’s not even counting the ones supermarkets and retail stores recycle every day. It’s the result of people moving into the community with a van full of packing cartons, combined with the waste generated by a prosperous community’s taste for consumer items that arrive in cardboard boxes.

Although the Township allowed curbside recycling of cardboard right from the start of its Collection Connection program in 2004, and later supplemented it with two commercial-size containers behind its Municipal Center, the demand for cardboard disposal just kept on growing.

“You buy a television, you buy a refrigerator, you buy a computer – it comes in a box,” Lorin Meeder, Cranberry’s environmental program coordinator, pointed out. “But what do you do with that box? It’s too big for your recycling container. So we get 1,200 pounds a week in the cardboard containers behind the Municipal Center. They fill up instantly. If we empty them out on Friday, they’re full by Sunday – even overflowing at certain times of the year. We didn’t want to put out more

containers; what we needed instead was some way to compact them to reduce the volume, reduce the number of trips, reduce the amount of fuel used – to reduce the whole carbon footprint.”

Then two summers ago, Meeder saw a trade magazine ad for a solar-powered compactor. He wrote a grant proposal to the state’s Department of Environmental Protection to buy one. Last spring, the grant – covering 90 percent of the unit’s \$35,000 cost – was approved. A competitively bid contract was awarded to Vogel Disposal that shares the costs as well as the income from collecting and selling the cardboard. And Pennsylvania’s DEP, which counts that cardboard toward Cranberry’s recycling goals, will even add funds to the Township’s annual performance grants as a result.

Today, the self-service compactor is up and running and available to residents 24/7. During just its first

six weeks, the unit collected six tons of cardboard.

Even at night and on cloudy days

when the solar collector isn’t getting enough sunlight to charge its batteries, the compactor will still run, although with a little help from standard power lines. But there are several ground rules. “You have to break the boxes down to get them inside the slot,” Meeder said.

“And we don’t want contamination – we don’t want Styrofoam or packing material. That should go in the garbage. Also preventing litter; we don’t want people leaving trash around.” Just to make sure, a pole-mounted camera will keep a watchful eye on the device.

User instructions are posted right on the unit. “The short version is that you put your cardboard in the slot and press the ‘start’ button,” Meeder explained. “That compacts it, and then it’s ready for the next customer.” ~

“What we needed instead was some way to compact them to reduce the volume, reduce the number of trips, reduce the amount of fuel used – to reduce the whole carbon footprint.”



Ain’t no sunshine. Neither cloudy days nor gloomy nights will keep Cranberry’s new solar-powered cardboard compactor from crushing the cartons brought to the back of the Municipal Center by residents eager to ditch their unwanted boxes. Material collected in the self-service unit, which was funded by a state DEP grant, will be sold at prevailing commodity prices.

Cranberry Pools Power Purchasing

Cranberry Township, together with some of its neighbors, is starting to flex its muscles in the electric power market. And the results are beginning to show up on the bottom line. Call it leverage.

Whatever you're buying, bigger is better. Take Wal-Mart, for example. The reason it can offer lower prices than other stores is that it buys in bigger quantities. So it pays less for each unit of merchandise than anyone else. But that same principle can apply to buyers of practically anything.

Cranberry Township buys a lot of electric power, at least compared to the typical household. But the rates it pays for that power don't necessarily reflect the scale of its purchases, which last year amounted to almost \$800,000.

Part of the reason is that instead of having one large account with the electric company, Cranberry currently has 83 – and that's down from an even larger number not too long ago.

Some of them huge, such as the wastewater treatment plant which consumed more than \$385,000 worth of electricity last year. But others are almost microscopic, including the flashing lights at various Township crosswalks, each of which the power company treats as a separate account.

Until recently, arcane PUC regulations governing the purchase of electricity didn't allow the Township to do much about it. But the power industry's gradual deregulation created a new opportunity: pooling accounts, at least for the power generation portion of the electric bill. "We were invited to participate in a group called 'DirectEnergy On Demand.' It's a power broker,"

Public Works Director Jason Daily explained.

"With deregulation, you're now able to aggregate these accounts, pull them together, and buy power at intervals throughout the year. Plus, we're able to put our very small accounts into it," Daily said. "So this is going to save us a lot of money. Our initial savings was estimated at \$17,000 for the year just by picking up those smaller accounts. It could be as much as \$60,000 when we pull all the accounts together."

One of the problems in the past had been that even though there were frequent swings in power rates, commercial customers had to lock in their purchases for the full contract period – often several years in length – all at one time. Sometimes it worked out, sometimes it didn't, because you never knew where the rates would go next.

"What ended up happening was that all of a sudden we had to become energy experts and figure out the best time to lock in," he said. "But now, with this new strategy, they can buy power in a step fashion. And, as prices keep getting lower, they can buy bigger and bigger bundles of power. So it's a much better strategy than having to figure out the best time to buy. Even when rates creep up, you're still not buying all your power in one swing."

And the benefits are not just limited to the Township's own accounts. "We have the Seneca Valley Schools, the Four-Points Sheraton, and

"We have the Seneca Valley Schools, the Four-Points Sheraton, and some restaurants in Cranberry as well as a few smaller companies in our pool. Everybody's energy is pooled together and purchased in bulk."



Sticker shock. Public Works Director Jason Dailey checks a power cabinet in the Public Works operations center. By combining Cranberry's electric power purchases with those of other commercial and institutional customers, all participants will realize significant savings.

some restaurants in Cranberry as well as a few smaller companies in our pool," Daily noted. "Everybody's energy is pooled together and purchased in bulk at different intervals. The risk is that you don't know the exact cost per kilowatt. But by losing the certainty of paying, say, 9.2¢ per kilowatt hour on some accounts, we end up paying somewhere between 6¢ and 8¢ per kilowatt hour. The average, over the course of a year, is well below the energy company's quoted rate."

That may be just the beginning, however. A newly-installed interval power meter at the Brush Creek wastewater treatment facility is starting to track the plant's energy

use every 15 minutes throughout the day. Once the results are known, plant operators may be in a position to reschedule equipment use in order to buy power at off-peak times and realize an additional 30 percent savings. ~



Easing The Chain Pain

Tire chains can be a big help when roads are icy and miserable. But the misery usually begins with putting them on in the first place – a tedious, time-consuming and dirty job. So most people don't use them, preferring instead to wait until the roads have been cleared. But if your job is to operate the plow that clears the roads, you don't have that luxury.

So Cranberry's Public Works Department has found a better solution: an automatic chain mounting system that the driver operates with just the flick of a switch. All the heavy trucks that Cranberry acquired over the past six years have been outfitted with the devices, which are now available from three different suppliers. It is a technology that first got its start with ambulances and fire engines.

"It's driven by air pressure, and when you hit the switch, it releases a chain arm which puts a rubber wheel against the tire," explains Cranberry Streets and Properties Manager Walt Beighey. "The rubber wheel is driven by the tire, so when the wheel hits the tire, it spins. On the end of the rubber wheel is a short piece of chain, so the wheel is driving this chain to slip underneath the tire."

The reverse is true for taking them off. "If you want to put them back

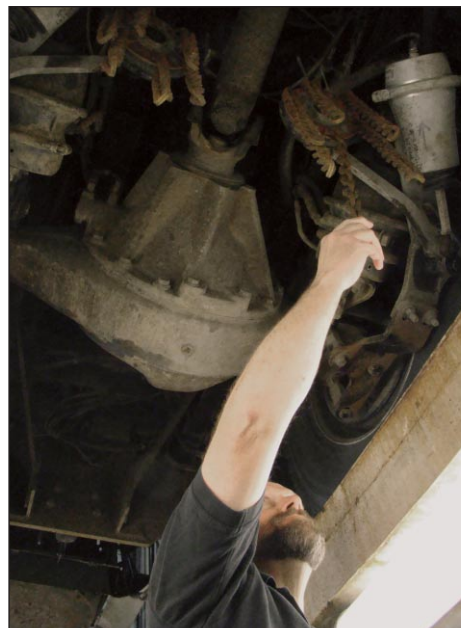
up, you put the lever the other way, it retracts and goes back to its stowed position and your chains are just hanging there," Beighey said.

However, due to the notoriously short lifespan of tire chains – generally less than 200 miles – it's a bad idea to use them when you don't really need them. So the Department's automatic systems allow snowplow operators to use their chains selectively as they go about clearing the Township's roadways.

"It used to be that the day before we knew a storm was coming, we would jack the trucks up, put the chains on, put bungees on, and get them ready to go," he recalled. "By the end of that night, we were back rebuilding the chains because they would have already started snapping."

But there's a caveat: you can't wait to get stuck and then mount the automated chains; you have to be moving to make it work. As a result, Beighey tells his crew, if you think you're going to be in trouble, put them on, get through whatever you've got to do, then release them back into the stowed position.

Years ago, when most American cars were rear-wheel drive, tire chains were commonly used to navigate Pittsburgh's hilly winter terrain.



Chain reaction. Streets and Properties Maintenance Manager Walt Beighey demonstrates the automatic tire chain feature on the Township's newer heavy trucks. Beighey is responsible for dispatching plows and salt trucks to clear local roads whenever a snow storm hits.

Today, with better tires, front wheel drive, all-wheel drive, improved road maintenance and global warming, chains and steel-studded tires are in much less frequent use.

But that's just fine with Beighey and his Public Works staff. "The fewer chains you've got, the better the roads are going to be; they chew up the surface." ~



The automatic systems allow snowplow operators to use their chains selectively as they go about clearing the Township's roadways.



JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

THURS 1		NEW YEAR'S DAY Twp Offices, Municipal Ctr, and Library Closed No School SVSD Waste Collection 1 day delay through 1/3			FRI 2		No School SVSD		SAT 3		Schedule of Saturday Computer Classes available in Library		SUN 4	MON 5		Board of Supervisors Organizational Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 6:30 pm			TUES 6		Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm Planning Commission Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 7 pm			
WED 7		Kids' Chapter Book Club* Grades 1-3, Library, 7:30 pm Family Pajama Time Library, 7 pm			THURS 8		Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm Senior Center Monthly Birthday Party Municipal Ctr, Senior Ctr, 9:30 am			FRI 9			Cranberry Twp Preschool Open House Municipal Ctr, 10 am – 2 pm			SAT 10		SUN 11		MON 12		Waste Collection Holiday Tree Pick Up through 1/23 on regular collection day		
TUES 13		Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm Cranberry Senior Citizen Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 1 pm Managing Arthritis presented by Alexander Ward, PT, DPT, Freedom Rehab Ctr, Library, 7 pm						WED 14		Kids' Chapter Book Club* Grades 1-3, Library, 7:30 pm Family Pajama Time Library, 7 pm Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Mtg Municipal Ctr, Tenant Conf. Rm, 7 pm								THURS 15		Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm				
FRI 16	SAT 17	SUN 18	MON 19	MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY No School SVSD			Waste Collection Holiday Tree Pick Up through 1/23 on regular collection day Zoning Hearing Board Mtg (if needed) Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 7:30 pm			TUES 20			Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm			WED 21					Book Discussion Wild Swans by Jung Chnag, Library, 10 am Kids' Chapter Book Club* Grades 1-3, Library, 7:30 pm Family Pajama Time Library, 7 pm			
THURS 22			Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm			FRI 23			Cranberry Twp Preschool Open House Municipal Ctr, 10 am – 2 pm			SAT 24	SUN 25	MON 26		Planning Commission Work Session Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 5:30 pm No School SVSD			TUES 27		Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm The Picky Eater: How To Promote Good Nutrition presented by Bellevue Pediatrics, Library, 7 pm			
WED 28		Kids' Chapter Book Club* Grades 1-3, Library, 7:30 pm Family Pajama Time Library, 7 pm			THURS 29						Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm Board of Supervisors Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 6:30 pm			FRI 30	SAT 31		Last Day for Waterpark Early Bird Rates			SUN 1	MON 2	GROUNDHOG DAY Book Discussion The Devil in the White City by Eric Larson, Library, 7 pm		

MON 2 Planning Commission Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 7 pm				TUES 3 Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm				WED 4 Family Pajama Time Library, 7 pm				THURS 5 Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm Board of Supervisors Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 6:30 pm				FRI 6 Wii Ultimate Championship Battle † Municipal Ctr, 7 - 10 pm				SAT 7		SUN 8		MON 9 Friends of the Cranberry Library Valentine Book Sale Library through 2/14	
MON 9 Walk-In AARP Tax Preparation Library, 10 am - 2 pm through 4/6						TUES 10 Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm Cranberry Senior Citizen Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 1 pm						WED 11 Sweetheart Bingo Municipal Ctr, 2 -3:30 pm Family Pajama Time Library, 7 pm Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Mtg Municipal Ctr, Tenant Conf. Rm, 7 pm								THURS 12 Daytime Storytime* 4 - 5 yrs old, Library, 11 am or 1 pm Senior Center Monthly Birthday Party Municipal Ctr, Senior Ctr, 9:30 am					
FRI 13		SAT 14 VALENTINE'S DAY				SUN 15		MON 16 PRESIDENT'S DAY Twp Offices open, Library closed No School SVSD Zoning Hearing Board Mtg (if needed) Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 7:30 pm						TUES 17		WED 18 Book Discussion One Thousand White Women by Jim Fergus, Library, 10 am Taking Care of Your Heart UPMC Passavant Wellness Series, Municipal Ctr, Senior Ctr, 12:30 pm						THURS 19			
FRI 20	SAT 21	SUN 22	MON 23 Planning Commission Work Session Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 5:30 pm			TUES 24 Mothers and Daughters, Growing Together: Puberty, 10-13 Yrs presented by Bellevue Pediatrics, Library, 7 pm				WED 25 ASH WEDNESDAY				THURS 26 Board of Supervisors Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 6:30 pm				FRI 27	SAT 28						

SUN 1	MON 2	Book Discussion The Flamingo Rising by Larry Baker, Library, 7 pm Planning Commission Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 7 pm	TUES 3	WED 4	THURS 5	Board of Supervisors Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 6:30 pm	FRI 6	SAT 7	SUN 8	Daylight Savings Time Begins set clocks ahead 1 hour	MON 9	TUES 10	Cranberry Senior Citizen Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 1 pm			
WED 11	Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Mtg Municipal Ctr, Tenant Conf. Rm, 7 pm		THURS 12		Senior Center Monthly Birthday Party Municipal Ctr, Senior Ctr, 9:30 am		FRI 13	SAT 14	SUN 15	MON 16			Zoning Hearing Board Mtg (if needed) Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 7:30 pm	TUES 17	ST. PATRICK'S DAY	
WED 18	Book Discussion Call for title, Library, 10 am Colorectal Cancer – What You Need to Know UPMC Passavant Wellness Series, Municipal Ctr, Senior Ctr, 12:30 pm				THURS 19	FRI 20		Spring Begins	SAT 21	SUN 22	MON 23	TUES 24			Things That Go Bump in the Night: Solving Your Child's Sleep Problem presented by Bellevue Pediatrics, Library, 7 pm	
WED 25	THURS 26		Board of Supervisors Mtg Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 6:30 pm		FRI 27	SAT 28	SUN 29		Morning with Mr. Bunny † Municipal Ctr, 12 – 2 pm		MON 30			Planning Commission Work Session Municipal Ctr, Council Chambers, 5:30 pm		TUES 31



New Head Librarian Favors Novel Partnerships

Young children reading stories to dogs, teenagers instructing senior

citizens in the fine points of computer use, and video gaming for patrons of every age are among the innovations that Leslie Palotta – Cranberry’s newly appointed Head Librarian – sees as opportunities for public libraries to continue serving their communities in the future.

For the past eight years Palotta, a Ross Township resident, worked at Moon Township’s library and, for the last three of those years, served as its Director. Before that, she worked at the McKinley Memorial Library in Niles, Ohio, the birthplace of the nation’s 25th president. Although it is not a formal presidential library – McKinley doesn’t have one – it comes pretty close, serving as a

museum as well as a repository for his presidential papers.

Ms. Palotta was recruited to lead the Cranberry Public Library this past fall, following the retirement of its long-time Head Librarian, Carol Troese. Her new appointment began January 2.

“I love that the Cranberry Library is a busy library. I love that it has a lot of energy,” Palotta reflected. “The children’s area especially strikes me. In addition to doing adult services, I spent a good deal of time as a children’s librarian as well. So wherever I am, I immediately go to the children’s section to see how that’s working; I think it’s a good indicator of how the community is using the library. There’s a lot of activity in that section, so I’m happy to see that. It’s not your grandmother’s library.”

It’s not her mother’s library, either. “My mom worked for Mellon Bank’s corporate library. She was a library

assistant there,” Palotta said. “She grew up loving libraries and passed that on to me. My brother and I were raised in a library atmosphere and constantly taken to the library as children – always being read to.”

“I worked in a library in college. I thought it was just going to be just my get-me-through-college job. But it ended up becoming my career,” she reflected. “People joked with me that as I got older, I should become a librarian. I resisted it for a long time. But ironically, the very first place I visited on my college campus was the library. And the reason I went there was not to check something out; it was because that’s where I knew I wanted to work.”

Reading to dogs – a popular library program in Cranberry and elsewhere – helps children build their confidence as readers. ~

CRANBERRY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Jane O'Donnell, Cranberry's Pioneer Librarian

Back before community libraries had become the information and technology hubs that people know today, they struggled to keep best-sellers and basic reference materials in the hands of their book-loving patrons. Jane O'Donnell, who had been Cranberry’s first head librarian until 1980, remembers it well, as do her five children – all of whom pitched in to help from time to time.

“We opened in 1975. It had taken the board about a year and a half to organize it.

“We started out in one room in the old municipal building on Rochester Road,” Mrs. O'Donnell said, recalling the library’s original ten-by-twelve foot space and 200 donated paperback books.

“When it got too big, the Township gave us another room in the building, so we had two rooms,” she said. “Then they built a second floor onto the building and redid the old police garage for us, so we had the library there for a while.”

Throughout that winter, as remodeling work was going on, the library and its three-member staff took up temporary quarters in two semi trailers parked in a lot behind the building.



Check it out. Back in 1975, Jane O'Donnell, on the right in this yellowing Butler Eagle newspaper photo, was Cranberry's first head librarian.

But once they were back in their remodeled space, during evening hours, the librarians had more on their hands than just circulating books. “There were five police officers in the same building, and they had nobody to watch their phone at night. So if it didn’t go through the 911, we answered their police calls, too,”

she said. “That’s just how things worked. It was a different era, that’s all.” ~

Doing Our Part

By Linda Andreassi, Communications Director

Finding ways to save money isn't exactly a new concept.

Many of us are aware now more than ever of the cost savings found in the simple act of turning off a light or lowering a thermostat.

Families have been practicing it for years and now the Seneca Valley School District is taking part. Members of the Seneca Valley Administration and Board Members recently took a proactive step in good stewardship of energy and taxpayer dollars by embarking on a comprehensive energy conservation and management program with Energy Education.

"This program is a people-oriented program," according to Rick Lapishka, assistant director of buildings, grounds and activities, and the newly appointed education manager for the District. "There is no equipment to purchase or lease. The program aims to change the habits of the people that use our facilities."

Energy Education is a national company whose energy conservation programs have saved more than \$1.5 billion for public school districts. Seneca Valley's program began earlier this school year with Mr. Lapishka conducting energy audits to ensure that students and teachers are comfortable during class time and scheduled activities, and that energy is used only as necessary.

As a key part of the program, Mr. Lapishka tracks energy consumption—including electricity, water, sewer, natural gas and fuel oil using energy-accounting software. The software compares current energy use to a baseline period and calculates the amount of energy that would have been used if conservation and management practices had not been implemented. It adjusts for weather, equipment additions or deletions, and changes in building use.

His role is to help motivate everyone in the district to use energy wisely, keep classrooms comfortable, take advantage of daylight and practice other smart energy strategies.



During the hours when the buildings are occupied, Mr. Lapishka can often be found reminding staff of the new guidelines as he works to change habits.

"Sometimes I even get suggestions on where I can find additional savings," he said. "I find that many people are behind this effort not only to save tax payer dollars, but to help save the environment by reducing our carbon footprint and carbon dioxide emissions."

All costs of the Energy Education program come from Seneca Valley's existing utility budget, with savings projected to more than pay for the program. Additional savings can be redirected to other parts of the district's budget.

Energy Education has worked with more than 900 educational organizations across the nation, positively impacting the educational environment of more than 12 million children and helping save more than \$1.5 billion in 23 years. It will take approximately six months before Seneca Valley's savings can be determined. But the impact is felt in more than just our schools.

"I have been told by several people that because of the program here at work, they are more aware of the energy savings opportunities at home, and even catch themselves doing things that they never did before," Mr. Lapishka said.

Here are a few suggestions for home:

- Replace incandescent bulbs with compact florescent bulbs.
- Replace a standard thermostat with a programmable one and set it back at night and during the day when nobody is home.
- Unplug device (phone, toys, game) chargers from the wall when devices are not being charged.
- Don't let the water run when brushing teeth.
- Set the hot water heater to a lower temperature (120 degrees should be hot enough).
- Wash clothes in warm water instead of hot.

In Briefs



Gimme Shelter. The Cranberry Highlands Clubhouse

has a new addition. A permanent stone and wood shelter outfitted with its own gas cooking grill, is now in place behind the rear patio; it will be open for business starting this spring. The shelter eliminates the need to erect tents, canopies, or other temporary shelters at the facility for weddings, meetings, or golf outings. To reserve the Clubhouse for your personal or business event, call Jon Shuster at 724-776-7372.



Miracle Award. Cranberry resident Mike Sherry, who has worked tirelessly to develop support for the

Miracle League baseball field now under construction in Graham Park, was named recipient of the Achieva family of philanthropies Award for Excellence in Community Inclusion. The award honors Sherry's work and dedication on behalf of people with disabilities. The Cranberry Miracle Field is part of a national movement creating a network of baseball fields that can be safely played by children using wheelchairs, braces, or other mobility aids.

Up For The Count. Preparations for the 2010 Census have already

begun. Census Bureau workers are now out on the street, attempting to verify the address list which will be used to mail questionnaires to every household in the country at the

**United States
Census
2010**

beginning of 2010. Cranberry Township officials will be cooperating with the Census Bureau throughout the year to help make sure that its head count, which forms the basis for congressional representation, public fund allocations, and more, is complete.

WaterPark Price Cut. Prices for 2009 memberships to the Cranberry Community WaterPark



purchased before January 31 have been reduced from previous years' Early Bird rates. Those reductions are especially significant for individuals and for families of two. However every category of membership, regardless of family size, will realize at least a \$5 reduction over the comparable rate from 2008. The initial discount period for membership runs through the end of January.

Cranberry Scores AAA Award. For the second year in a row, Cranberry Township has been awarded the Regional AAA Platinum Safety Award – the association's highest – for its efforts to enhance traffic safety. The award recognizes work by the Township Police, Engineering and Public Works departments in identifying problem areas on local roadways and fixing them. The roads targeted in this year's award included portions of Graham School, Powell and Unionville roads. Other Township safety programs, including Project Buckle Up, Smooth Operator, child safety seat checks and motor carrier inspections also contributed to the award.



Penn Power Eyes Township Site. The



conceptual plan for a new electrical substation to serve a power-hungry customer base in Cranberry was shown to the Board of Supervisors on October 30. The idea for the facility – which is still in its preliminary stages – is to tap into the Allegheny Power high-tension line that crosses the Township, step it down to lower voltage, and distribute it to commercial and residential customers in Cranberry. The company has proposed a 5.8 acre Township site adjacent to Community Park. However a number of issues must be addressed before any action is taken by the Board.



New Guard At CTVFC. A new generation of leadership has been installed by Cranberry Township's Volunteer

Fire Company. At the CTVFC November annual meeting, long-time President Chris DeCree stepped down from that post in favor of Bruce Hezlep. Other Company officers elected include John Kontros, Vice President; Carolyn Nelson, Secretary; Jim Cole, Treasurer; and Mike Hanks and Ryan McDonald, Directors at Large. Most of the Company's brigade officers – firefighters who represent the organization's 911 emergency operations – remain in place from 2008.

Recognition Lunch. At its January 16 annual meeting and Kick-Off

Luncheon, the Cranberry Area Chamber of Commerce and CTCC – the Cranberry Township Community



Chest – will present awards to several individuals and organizations in recognition of their contributions to our community. Chris DeCree and Dave Berneberg of the Volunteer Fire Company will be honored for their extraordinary volunteer work over many years, and Ralph Mashuda will be presented a Community Service Award for his company's generous help to the Township, including the grading of Graham Park. Contact the Chamber office for reservations: 724-776-4949.

Rolling Workshop. A new high-top diesel van equipped with a standup



work bench, an assortment of tools, and essentially all the materials needed to keep the Township's buildings in good repair, has joined the Cranberry fleet. It replaces a much less efficient vehicle which had been used for maintenance purposes before. By cutting down on the multiple trips which were previously required to find tools and parts, the van is expected to speed repairs and save staff time.

It's Too Late! Any 2008 Butler County/Cranberry Township or 2008-2009 Seneca Valley School District real estate taxes that weren't paid in full by December 31 have been turned over to the County's Tax Claim Bureau. You can reach them at 724-284-5326. Your 2009 Butler County-Cranberry Township tax bill will be mailed on March 1 and can be paid at the discount rate through April 30. If you have changed your mortgage company or are no longer using an escrow account to pay your property taxes, contact the tax collector's Municipal Center office at 724-776-1103. ~

Winter Tips...

Cranberry's Public Works Department reminds residents that when shoveling snow, shovel it to the right side of your driveway – otherwise a passing plow is likely to push it back and undo your work. If you have a fire hydrant in front of your house, don't shovel snow on top of it; firefighters need to spot it and get to it quickly in case of emergency. And if your indoor water meter is enclosed, open the space to allow warm air from the house to get in – otherwise your pipes can freeze, creating all sorts of mischief.



Cranberry's 2009 budget provides no tax increase

Continued from front cover

fees it generates were also a source of concern, resulting in a much leaner forecast for revenue from fees.

Uncertainty about the length, depth, and impact of a nationwide economic downturn on Township revenues also made long-range forecasting more difficult than usual. "We expect our 2009 revenue to be up slightly, but not as much as we usually see," she continued. "I think we'll have to be extra diligent in terms of watching the money come in this year, making sure we're on

target. If we see it sliding, then we'll need to make some adjustments."

But in government as in other areas of life, timing can be everything. "We were very excited that we were smart enough to do the bond issue for Graham Park in May, when we got it at 3.7 percent interest," she said. "Since then, municipal bond insurance rates have skyrocketed. And because we had a great rating, we went on our own. But for municipalities that need bond insurance, it's incredibly expensive – almost prohibitive for a bond issue.

Fortunately, prudent financial planning by our Board of Supervisors has positioned Cranberry Township perfectly for this type of event.

"This was an interesting budget year – a lot of unknowns," Gleason reflected. "We want to be diligent – we don't want to be cavalier. But the Board has been diligent about maintaining an excellent financial position for Cranberry. Their stewardship has put us in a good position to manage through current economic conditions. Their leadership really shines in times like these." ~

TRACO Opens A New Window On Change In Cranberry

If you're ever lucky enough to climb her stairs and gaze out any of the 15 windows in the Statue of Liberty's crown, you will not only be treated to a commanding view of New York harbor, you will also see – just inches in front of you – something much closer to home: the corporate logo of Traco.

Traco, Cranberry's largest employer for the past 30 years, manufactures commercial-grade windows and doors. With its corporate headquarters in Cranberry Industrial Park and sister manufacturing operations in Tennessee and Georgia, Traco serves architectural clients throughout North America. But few of its employees, and almost none of its current customers, actually reside in Cranberry.

Back in 1971, when the family-owned company first relocated from Pittsburgh's Manchester district to Cranberry, the Township had just one traffic light, CEO Robert Randall recently recalled.

"We built 10,000 square feet here, on three acres. Our sales manager at the time, John Kalakos, who is now our Executive VP, came into the plant and said 'my God, how are we ever going to fill this up?'"

But by 2008, after four major additions, the Cranberry facility covered a million square feet, staffed by a workforce of 1,100. And just this past summer, the company celebrated the 65th anniversary of its founding by Randall's parents as the Three Rivers Aluminum Company – a home improvement business on Pittsburgh's North Side.

Back in 1971, when the family-owned company first relocated from Pittsburgh's Manchester district to Cranberry, the Township had just one traffic light.

Today, many of America's most recognizable buildings are outfitted with Traco window systems made in Cranberry, including the Empire State and Flatiron Buildings in New York – a city where numerous high-rise buildings are either built from, or retrofitted with, the company's high-end commercial products. In Florida, big-box retail stores distribute Traco's hurricane-resistant products. And at many U.S. embassies and military bases here and overseas, the windows are made from Traco's blast-resistant products. But it is the Statue of Liberty which became the company's signature project.

"We do a lot of work in New York City, and the Ellis Island reconstruction manager was a very good client of ours," Randall recounted. "One of the principals had asked us to look at the job, but I kept refusing because it was an engineering nightmare and we were very busy at the time. Then one day, the principal came here to witness a test for one of his high-rise buildings. After the test, he came in my office and said 'I really want you to look at this job.'"

"The next day, replicas of the statue's original drawings appeared on my desk. We reviewed them and I said ok, we'll have a look. So we flew to New York and went out to the island. The statue was shrouded in scaffolding. It was a picture-perfect day. We went into the hoist, got to the top, the door opens, and there's her head, with New York City in the background. I said 'guys, we've got to do this.'"



NextGen. Traco combined European technology with home-grown know-how to create a new generation of ultra-energy efficient doors and windows using high performance glass fabricated on a specially-equipped line in the company's massive Cranberry Township plant. CEO Robert Randall, left, oversees the operation.

"One of the best things about it was that we never assigned the job to anyone in our company; people volunteered, and they did things they had never done before because the material we had to use was bronze – not aluminum. They were all individually hand-made, and they turned out to be 15 absolute jewels."

Randall has witnessed tremendous growth and change during his company's 38 years in Cranberry. But for Traco, as for other manufacturing firms, it's been a mixed blessing.

"Maintaining the size of our workforce has been a very big challenge for the last several years," he said.

"There just aren't enough people available for manufacturing. It's become a service-oriented region. Very few of our employees come from Cranberry now; they're coming from Evans City, Mars, Butler, Beaver County and we have people busing up from Pittsburgh. So we're bringing them in from surrounding areas. We used to get a lot of good young people from high schools through school-to-work programs. But today, most of those programs have been discontinued." ~

Although widely known for its retail businesses, Cranberry is also becoming an important high technology center. Each issue of CranberryToday features the profile of a different local technology company and offers a glimpse into the Township's emerging knowledge-based economy.

Profile of a firefighter:

In The Kontros Household, Firefighting Is A Family Affair

For years, John Kontros had wanted to be a Cranberry firefighter, just like his wife Maria. And many of Maria's fellow brigade members had encouraged him to join. But his job with a mortgage company, which required his keeping Tuesday evening hours, was always in conflict with the Fire Company's own monthly meetings.

Then in 2004, after 27 years with the same firm, his day job suddenly disappeared. So the first thing he told his wife was that, at last, he was going to join the Fire Company. "No," she told him, "you're going to find a job first."

But John stuck to his guns, deciding to join the Fire Police – a specialized unit of CTVFC that manages traffic around active fire zones, working to protect firefighters as well as motorists – many of whom are frustrated by restricted roads while firefighters battle the blaze. And in 2007, he won the Chief's Award for demonstrating unusual initiative, despite his relatively short tenure.

Service with the Fire Police requires its own training and 16 hours of continuing education a year. A significant part of it has to do with handling combative motorists who – despite warning signs, cones, flares, and signal lanterns – remain oblivious to the danger, mowing down

cones and sometimes forcing John to dive out of the way to avoid being hit. Others arrive with a litany of curious questions, excuses for ignoring the warnings, pleadings for alternative directions, or requests to be made an exception so they can get to their home, job, or appointment.

In Cranberry, however, with the Fire Company's heavy emphasis on training, Fire Police are encouraged to learn the basics of firefighting as well. Yet despite the demands, John quickly rose to Fire Police lieutenant and was elected a Fire Company vice president for 2009. "I'm not the kind of guy who can easily say 'no'," Kontros admitted.

While Maria knows she was a motivating factor in John's decision to join the Fire Company, what she wasn't prepared for was the extent of his involvement. "John is unbelievable in how he has jumped into this," she said. "I didn't know he was that interested. He is influential and respected by so many people there now, it's wonderful."

John's sense of commitment also carried over to his working life, where he quickly snagged a management position with Target.

Back in the '60s and '70s, when she was still a child, Maria's father served as West Mifflin Fire Company's Chief. And she was eager to become a firefighter herself. But her father saw things differently, refusing to let her join.



"Then I got married and we had our daughter Brittany. So, I put it on a back burner," she recalled. "But when Brittany was 14, I talked to John about it and then joined."

Despite her own asthma condition, Maria became a member of the Fire Company's Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus team where her assignment is to track exactly who enters a burning building and where they are at all times.

Her biggest challenge came at the outset with the initial fire training course, called 'Essentials'. But with the help of Company veterans and training twice a week over a three-month interval, she mastered the thick manual, passed the required tests, and never looked back.

Brittany, now a newlywed herself, was reluctant to become a firefighter. But she joined the Ladies Auxiliary, arranging social events for the Company and preparing food to deliver to firefighters responding to a lengthy structure fire. "I didn't feel I had the courage they did," she said. "I'm just not that type. I look up to firefighters like I do to people in the armed forces, because they risk their lives for others." ~

Service with the Fire Police requires its own training and 16 hours of continuing education a year. A significant part of it has to do with handling combative motorists.

Cranberry welcomes new Fire Company volunteers throughout the year. To learn more, call 724-776-1196.

Reading Smoke Signals

New building materials present novel risks to firefighters.

House fires have posed a serious danger to every generation. But the current generation of housing adds a special set of risks to residents and firefighters alike. That's because the building materials now in common use are very different than the traditional wood and masonry used in construction for centuries before. They are manmade, and in a fire, they behave like nothing before them.

To Cranberry Volunteer Fire Company Chief Bill Spiegel, who is responsible for the safety of both his residents and first responders, those changes make training more critical than ever. "Buildings are being fabricated out of lighter-weight materials and they're being pre-fabricated off site, brought in, and put together as a jigsaw puzzle," he said. "The materials burn more rapidly and with higher heat intensity. The buildings tend to collapse faster and the materials inside the structures burn with higher toxicity. That creates a real issue for the responder."

Unlike conventional lumber, which burns slowly, composite materials like pressed board and particle board are glued together and burn much more rapidly. Home insulation made from plastic foam is also prone to burning quickly and emitting toxic fumes in the process. Even the main support members of a

house structure have changed. "A lot of times they don't use steel beams anymore; they're using particle board beams that are laminated together," Spiegel noted.

Not only that, the fact that homes are being built tighter to become more energy efficient means that the gasses and heat which result from a fire aren't escaping. "We have the potential to get into a flashover relatively quickly," he explained.

In a flashover, heat from a growing fire is absorbed into the walls and contents of a room, heating its combustible gases and furnishings to the point of sudden ignition. When a flashover occurs, it essentially eliminates the possibility of search and rescue, spelling grave danger to anyone trapped there – civilian or firefighter.

So how does a firefighter know what materials have actually been used in the house? "In responding to a structure fire, one thing you always want to look for is the age of the community that building is in," Spiegel said. "Chances are, if a building is older, it was built with heavier grade materials.

The newer construction tends to be the lighter-weight construction, and Cranberry Township is a relatively new community. So a building's age is an



important clue as to what materials were used in its construction."

Reading the smoke for signs of what's inside a fire is also a critical part of the firefighter's response. "We train our firefighters extensively on reading the types of smoke we see emitting from a building," he said. "Whether it's lazy-moving, or heavy-moving, or fast-moving smoke; whether it's a color, whether it's a light gray or white or a heavy black smoke, it gives them an idea of what progression the fire has already made. If there's fire emitting from the structure when we get to the scene, that's an important clue as well.

Yellow or brown smoke, smoke which comes out in puffs around the edges of doors and windows, and windows which appear brown or black when seen from outside, are all signs of incomplete combustion, typically caused by lack of oxygen. They are also telltale signs of an imminent backdraft – the explosive re-ignition of a fire if oxygen is suddenly re-introduced into the room.

"We train extensively on search techniques," Spiegel said. "We train on how to recognize the potential for a flashover or a backdraft. And we train on ventilation processes to reduce that risk and to release the heat and gas from the interior of the structure to help firefighters battle the blaze or rescue a potentially trapped victim." ~



Fire Fighters Leaner (But Not Meaner)

Three-quarters of America's firefighters are volunteers. But the Number One killer of volunteer firefighters on duty doesn't involve any of the grim dangers inherent in fighting burning buildings, containing wildfires, or rescuing people trapped in auto wrecks. It's heart attacks.

Nationwide, of the 100-plus volunteer firefighters who die responding to alarms each year, more than half are from heart attacks. Unlike career firefighters, who can frequently squeeze exercise into slack times during their duty shift, most volunteer firefighters hold the same sorts of sedentary day jobs which are typical of today's workforce. As a result, getting themselves in shape so they can snap into action in the middle of the night requires a special effort.

Although to date, Cranberry's volunteer fire company has been spared a fatal heart attack, nobody is immune. So a year and a half ago, the Company organized a wellness program to focus the same intense camaraderie and teamwork on improving their physical condition as they do in fighting fires.

Fire Fighter John Pristas, a health advocate and former UPMC program administrator whose current day job involves representing a Boston-based maker of artificial hearts, is its chair. As Pristas puts it, "health issues are close to my heart."

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To help keep the program's goals top of mind, Pristas makes extensive use of email, often sending three or four health-related emails a week to his fellow firefighters. Although his efforts have earned him the tongue-in-cheek title of 'Spaminator' among Company members, it has also kept health awareness at high levels.

The Fire Company's wellness program is based, in part, on recommendations offered by a website called Heart-Healthy Firefighter. And one element of it includes weight management. "We sponsor a Weight Watchers program which is open to everyone in the Company," Pristas said. "The first time we did it, we had 23 people sign up and we lost over 400 pounds during a 12-week course. We had a second signup that we're just finishing now, with 15 people. We've lost 150 pounds this time."

Weight loss, however, is only part of the program. "It's a change of lifestyle," outgoing Fire Company president DeCree explains. "Once the program is over, you're committed to continue whatever you're doing with it. You change your eating habits, you change your smoking habits, you change whatever you're doing. And when our guys enter the program, they stay with it until they finish. They meet every month to see how they're doing," DeCree said. "I've lost 35 pounds."

For a number of years, the Fire Company has maintained a room outfitted with exercise equipment in the Rt. 19 Park Station. But its use had always been casual. However,



Fit Firefighters. Firefighter and fitness enthusiast John Pristas, left, runs the Fire Company's wellness program. With him at the Rt. 19 Park Fire Station's elliptical exercise machine are David Watkins and Chris DeCree. Participating firefighters in the Company's Weight Watchers program lost a combined total of more than 500 pounds in 2008.

that too is starting to change. "We bring a professional trainer in once a year to teach people how to use the exercise equipment," DeCree explained. "You can work out all you want, but if you're not doing it properly, it really doesn't help you. These professional people come in and tell you the kind of stuff you would do down at their gym."

The Fire Company's exercise facility is available all the time and members often drop in, use it for 10 or 15 minutes, and then come back later on. "The only time it's scheduled is when we bring in the trainer," DeCree said. "The YMCA sends down an instructor and they're not charging us." But it's sort of a barter arrangement, he explained. "In return, we go up and teach their personnel fire safety – how to evacuate their building." ~

CTVFC ♥ Mine Safety Appliance

Every fire engine in Cranberry is equipped with a thermal imaging camera; it's one of the first tools that's taken off the truck during a call.

It looks like a cross between a Star Wars-style ray gun and a handheld TV set, except that the images on its screen seem unnaturally ghostlike. That's because, instead of using light from the visible spectrum to create a traditional picture, it uses infrared frequencies – the otherwise invisible electromagnetic waves associated with heat rather than light. So the picture you see on its screen is actually showing heat sources, including animals, overheated wires, and hotspots of every sort that you would never see with an unaided eye.

Normally the cameras are used to pinpoint fires concealed behind walls or other enclosed spaces in a building. But not always. "It's a great rescue tool," Fire Company Administrative Assistant Mark Nanna pointed out. "If somebody's in a building and the crew takes its thermal imaging camera in, they can actually pick up body heat. We train on using it in smoke conditions because you can't see in the smoke when you go into a fire. If you go in and put that camera up, you can see what's in front of you, if there's somebody lying on the floor."

But it has unconventional uses as well. "The police have borrowed it a couple times," Nanna said. "One time, they had a prisoner crawl up into the ceiling; he was trying to get away by going through the rafters. They were chasing him around, but couldn't figure out exactly where he

was. So they called us, we brought the camera down, and we walked around pointing it at the ceiling. And all of a sudden, there he was! That's when he came crashing down through the tile."

Each thermal imaging camera costs \$12-15,000. But last year, the Cranberry Volunteer Fire Company received one as a gift from its maker – the Mine Safety Appliance company based in Cranberry Woods; MSA also donated two new air cylinders worth \$1,000

apiece. And the Fire Company has worked to repay that generosity. Part of it comes through training MSA employees in the proper use of fire extinguishers. Another part comes through beta testing – trying out MSA product prototypes and providing them with feedback. But most of it comes from help with marketing.

"Every year, the big trade show for firefighters is in Indianapolis," Nanna explained. "That's where they bring out new products, and they like to do photo shoots of the products in use. Since their headquarters are here in Cranberry, we've come to know them pretty well. They call me, I get some guys together, we go up to the training tower or wherever, and we do a photo shoot for them. It's usually an all-day event. We've done quite a few."

In one instance, every firefighter who appeared in the photo shoot



Gottcha. The picture of Fire Company Administrative Assistant Mark Nanna captured on the display of this MSA thermal imaging camera was created from infrared radiation rather than visible light. The rugged cameras, which are carried on every CTVFC fire truck, can see heat sources, including concealed fires, right through a building's walls and ceilings.

was given a custom fire helmet. In another, which demonstrated MSA's newest self-contained breathing apparatus, the Fire Company was given a thermal imaging camera for its help.

"When you see their brochures, it shows our guys, our trucks," Nanna noted with pride. "We did a video that they showed at the big fire show, and it was all our guys. And they had a big banner going across the front, and that was one of our guys, too."

"All of our air supply equipment is from MSA," outgoing Fire Company President Chris DeCree observed. "It's good for maintenance because we don't have to look for parts from different companies. All the packs are the same model. Helmets, cameras – everything is from MSA. It's because of the way we operate and the way they operate. They're a good corporate neighbor." ~

"They like to do photo shoots of their products in use. We go up to the training tower and we do a photo shoot for them. We've done quite a few."



Fire Company Offers Clean, Cheap Fire Extinguisher Training

Just about everyone has at least one fire extinguisher at home and at work, but hardly anyone ever uses them. That can

be a problem when an emergency arises, because if you've never operated one before, you may not be able to use it effectively. That's where Cranberry's volunteer fire company comes in.

"We get calls from Chamber of Commerce members asking us to train their employees in how to use extinguishers," according to fire company administrative assistant Mark Nanna. "So we show them how."

Over the years, Cranberry's fire company had given countless demonstrations showing the proper use of fire extinguishers. But it triggered some messy problems. "We used to take a quarter of a 55-gallon drum, pour a little diesel fuel in it, light it with a flare, and then have them take a real extinguisher and put it out" Nanna recalled. "But it's very dirty. And second, it's very expensive; every time you discharge a fire extinguisher, it's about \$80 to get it filled again."

So two years ago, the Company took a different path and acquired a lookalike simulator. "We bought the fire extinguisher simulator because it was starting to get expensive for us and for them," he said. "It's a pan that you connect to a propane bottle and then put a little bit of water into a special fire extinguisher equipped with tiny transmitters."

Although the unit's propane flames are authentic, they are not actually put out by the extinguisher's small stream of pressurized water. Instead, when its handle is squeezed, the extinguisher emits a sound frequency simulating the lifelike noise of a real-life extinguisher in operation. When the burner's sensors pick up that sound, their propane valve shuts down and puts out the flame.

"It gives people a chance to see how it really works. We tell them when to use it, how to use it, what to do, what not to do, how far to stand away from the unit. It's used exactly like a real extinguisher," he said. "But instead of using diesel fuel and making nasty black smoke when I'm trying to get it to light with a flare, we can set it up in ten minutes. We've already done more than 100 people in a single day." ~



"Two years ago, the Company took a different path and acquired a lookalike simulator. It's used exactly like a real extinguisher. It gives people a chance to see how it really works."

Realistic simulation. Fire Company veterans Chris DeCree and Dave Berneburg demonstrate the Company's fire extinguisher simulation system which is used to train local residents and workers in the proper use of household fire extinguishers. Fire Company Administrative Assistant Mark Nanna, to the left, controls the flow of propane feeding the fire.

Graham Park: Just Wait 'Til Spring

No firm date has been announced for the official opening of Cranberry's new Dick's Sporting Goods Sportsplex at Graham Park. But work on the spectacular new facility has been moving forward rapidly and its dedication is only months away. Invitations and announcements about the Grand Opening will be issued as plans are finalized with the park's major partners – Dick's, the Pirates Charities, and the local athletic associations.

In the meantime, though, most of the park's major features can be clearly seen from a distance. Access roads and parking lots – which are still closed to the public – have now been paved. Most of the walking/bicycle trail is finished. Sidewalks are in place. The park's concession buildings are all taking shape. The soccer complex is moving along well. The maintenance shed is almost done. The park's irrigation systems have been working well and

the grass is growing in nicely.

"All our turf surfaces are growing well," Township engineer Jason Kratsas reports. "I think we've established enough turf on all playing surfaces that we'll be in good shape come spring.

On the park's baseball campus – one of three field clusters in the park – an asphalt pavement base has been put down for the Miracle Field; its rubberized playing surface will be laid in the spring. A signage system for navigating to and through the park has begun, although more details remain to be worked out, and the baseball dugouts are started, but not yet complete.

Park furniture – benches, concession tables, fountains, and bleachers – have all been ordered. And the superstructure for a tall identity sign



along the Turnpike is now largely in place, although the electric service has not yet been hooked up.

However all of that will be taken care of shortly.

In the meantime, though, the park remains a construction site under the responsibility of the general contractor, and patience is needed because until it opens, anyone using the fields without authorization is considered to be trespassing. ~

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