



BUCKS COUNTY HERALD

THE VOICE OF CENTRAL AND UPPER BUCKS COUNTY

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CHARLES AND BETSY MEREDITH

Dear Friends,
Good morning. Last week, my book club discussed an excellent book, "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time."

The 221-page book (fiction) by Mark Haddon is told through the eyes of a brilliant teenage mathematician with autism. I have never known anyone with autism like a friend whose grandson is affected by it. The friend belongs to our bookclub and told us that the book was accurate.

Each year, Philadelphia recommends a book for its residents. A year or two ago, "The Curious Incident..." was the choice. It has also appeared as a play. In any event, it sparked a lively discussion and it will for you too. I encourage you to pick up a copy.

On another topic, a few weeks ago, the Upper Bucks Chamber of Commerce and Grand View Hospital sponsored an event that featured the Bucks County commissioners discussing current topics. Commissioner Chair Charles Martin emphasized the success of the Agricultural Land Preservation Program, which has preserved more than 16,000 acres and 199 farms.

Ten years ago, Bucks County voters approved a 10-year preservation project through a bond issue. While the bond issue money has been spent, the county will continue to acquire land in the years ahead. We don't know whether there are immediate plans to seek taxpayers' approval for another bond issue.

Fifty years ago, my fellow commissioner, Joe Canby, told me that open space does not require the building of schools or roads or water and sewer projects. Farm animals only require room to graze. That's why it's so important to keep development at bay.

But in the meantime, the cost of running our public schools is growing each year. The QuakerTown School District has raised property taxes every year for more than a quarter century.

For years, I've been recommending that the Pennsylvania Legislature abandon the property tax as the principle source for public school funding by substituting a tax on income (or sales or both). I would have the state collect a public-school tax and send the appropriate revenue back to the 500 school districts on a per-pupil basis.

There's plenty of disagreement about the fairness of my suggestion. In last week's Herald, Jodi Spiegel Arthur wrote about a report issued by the Keystone Research Center: "The tax shift... designed to relieve senior citizens of the burden of property taxes... would mean an increase of \$334 in taxes per family next year, with middle-income residents absorbing the largest tax increase as a percentage of their income," Keystone warned.

"The proposed tax shift would distribute significantly more in state funds to higher-income areas that currently fund schools with higher local real estate taxes."

According to Keystone, property taxes collected per student during the 2014-2015 school year ranged in Bucks County from \$8,004 per student in the Bristol Borough School District to \$17,792 per student in the New Hope-Solebury School District. In Central Bucks, the amount collected per student was \$10,938.

And that's exactly my point. It's not fair. The school tax is based primarily on the value of real estate but the spending per student is not equal. Even though they're only 20 miles apart, New Hope-Solebury can provide far more assets to its children than Bristol can. Meanwhile, the QuakerTown School District is facing a \$4.7 million budget shortfall, which will require difficult choices. One of them is to close the Millford Middle School in September. Another is to raise the real estate school tax by eight percent.

Paul Stepanoff and Charles Shermer, the school board president and vice president, respectively, sent a letter to district tax payers (March 29) which outlined the funding problems. They also included this paragraph: "The school board's top priority is to achieve college and career readiness for every student, while at the same bringing fiscal discipline and efficiency in running the school district."

"For the past three years, the superintendent and his administration have done a remarkable job in controlling expenses," the letter concluded. "Simultaneously, our students and teachers are doing a remarkable job in the classroom. In 2016, the high school was ranked #1 in Bucks County and #12 in Pennsylvania on the state's report card."

Be that as it may, Pennsylvania's system of relying upon property taxes to fund public schools is just not fair. And there's no remedy in sight as long as the legislators hide from tough decisions.

Sincerely, Charles Meredith

By the way, every time I read that the Bucks County Community College is raising tuition, I pause. While the amount is small... an increase of \$5 per credit... the costs to students and their families adds up. The good news is that the BCCC continues to be a remarkable bargain. The new cost means that a Bucks County full-time student who takes a typical 12 credits each semester will pay slightly more than \$4,400 in tuition and fees for the next full school year beginning in the fall.

Compare that cost to \$60,000 yearly for a private college. What needs fixing is the share that Bucks County and Pennsylvania contribute to BCCC. When the college began in 1965, the Pennsylvania Legislature stipulated that students, Bucks County taxpayers and the state would each pay one third of the costs. That formula certainly changed drastically.

Today, BCCC receives almost 50 percent of its money from students, 27 percent from the state, 18 percent from Bucks County taxpayers, and the balance from auxiliary sources.

charles.meredith@quakerstown.omicrosoft.com

LETTERS TO THE HERALD

Eyewitness recorded views of World War I

I very much enjoyed the history of Company G in your April 6 "March to War in 1917." Readers might enjoy listening to an eyewitness account of the day the soldiers left the Doylestown train station.

Lester Trauch's oral history found at soleburyhistory.org (tape #1) recounts the event through the eyes of a 10-year-old who was at the station with hundreds of other townspeople. His anecdote recalls the "sweethearts and steams" waving goodbye as the train pulled away and a final song rose up, bringing tears to my eye. Of the fallen he recalls several Bucks County post offices were named for them.

Lester Trauch went on to become a longtime Intelligencer reporter who eventually left us three wonderful oral histories, which touched on his first-hand Bucks County experiences, now our history.

Do you want to hear about New Hope's Playhouse opening night in 1939? Lester was there.

Robert McEwan
Solebury Township

Donations help Township dental care at no cost

As the country varies the final outcome of the Affordable Care Act and the effect on low-income families in our community, there is one aspect of overall health that continues to be overlooked -- and we need the support of our community to continue addressing it.

Low-income adults in our community simply cannot afford to see a dentist and receive proper oral health care. Poor oral health translates into poor overall health.

HealthLink Dental Clinic eliminates this financial barrier by providing underserved adults with quality, compassionate dental care at no cost.

Last year, HealthLink Dental Clinic provided 2,662 appointments to 1,779 patients. In 2017, we expect to reach even more, but we need your help.

The clinic is funded entirely by donations from the community. We are not part of a hospital or health care system. We do not receive government funding or payments from Medicaid or private insurance companies.

A matching gift challenge has afforded us a unique opportunity. All new or increased donations from individuals will be matched through April 30.

We are \$8,000 shy of meeting our \$25,000 matching gift challenge. Help us meet our goal by making a donation online today at: www.healthlinkdental.org.

Donations can also be mailed to HealthLink, Attn: Matching Gift Challenge, 1775 Street Road, Southampton, 18966.

Bernie Dishler D.D.S.
Board President, HealthLink Dental Clinic

Art of the deal may come to fruition

The author of "The Art of the Deal" may have killed two different kinds of birds with his decision in dropping the "mother of all bombs" on Islamist terrorists hiding in caves in Afghanistan. He certainly put the fear of our God into their existence.

The other bird is named Kim Jung Un of North Korea. I believe that a strategy was developed in a

recent meeting between President Xi of China Jinping and Mr. Trump.

If Kim Jung Un does another missile test or worse, China could put on sanctions against North Korea because it has the power and ability to do that. This could result in a coup in North Korea that would lead to the demise of Kim Jung Un. If this happens another art of the deal would end successfully.

Don Landry, Franconia

IRS needs funding to help collect taxes

The budget proposed by the Trump administration cuts or even eliminates funding for many critical government programs, from environmental protection to the State Department, from health care to the arts. People and organizations are lobbying frantically to restore money for their various causes.

However, the agency that most needs funding is the one that we all love to hate, the Internal Revenue Service. The reason is simple: without the IRS collecting taxes, no other agency could function. No one enjoys paying taxes, but everyone reaps the benefit of government services.

Worse than paying our own taxes is to have an antiquated, inefficient, stretched tax collector unable to protect us from tax evaders and tax cheats. The Treasury Department estimates that for every extra dollar spent on IRS enforcement, the government will get four dollars back. The IRS commissioner has stated, "Essentially, the government is losing billions to achieve budget savings of a few hundred million dollars."

Simply put, the IRS does not have sufficient auditors and staff to collect what individuals and businesses owe. As a result, the government lost tens of billions of dollars in the last few years.

With those missing dollars restored, we could help fund the programs the country desperately needs, without fighting over the leftover scraps in the budget.

Tom Thomas, Doylestown

Debunking falsehoods on Planned Parenthood

In this day and age with all the information out there about Planned Parenthood, there still seems to be a pervasive misconception that Planned Parenthood is a government funded facility performing abortions.

A quick fact check on Google states that Planned Parenthood was founded by Margaret Sanger on October 16, 1916 in Brooklyn, N.Y., as the first birth control clinic in the country under the name the American Birth Control League as a nonprofit organization. Margaret Sanger publicly condemned abortion, arguing that it would not be needed if every woman had access to birth control.

The name changed to Planned Parenthood Federation of America in 1942 to be more inclusive sounding to families. It grew worldwide to provide a wide range of women's and men's health services. In the United States, Planned Parenthood has never received government funds for abortions. It submits medical invoices for preventative care to Medicaid just like private hospitals and physicians and in turn receives reimbursement.

Patients who wish to receive an

abortion are counseled and given options other than abortion well before that procedure is performed. If the patient opts for an abortion, that patient must pay for it out of pocket.

Bucks County is considered "too affluent" to meet government qualifications for federal health clinics. Disfranchising a whole segment of our society will cost us greatly in skyrocketing medical costs. These people would be forced to go to a local hospital's emergency room to seek care as a last resort instead of preventative care, which keeps costs down.

If you have a heart and aren't "abusing up" on the name, call and write your senators to demand that Planned Parenthood not be defunded due to ignorance.

Michele Vielle, Warrington

Reversing Clean Power Act puts all at risk

President Trump's executive order reversing the clean power plan does not make America great again. Instead, it cedes leadership to other countries and puts everyone at risk.

Mr. Trump advertised the moves as a way to decrease the nation's dependence on imported fuels and revive the flagging coal industry; that is a blatant lie. Coal will not come back -- because of lower costs of other energy, including renewable energy.

In reality the U.S. does not import coal and since May 2011, the country became a net exporter of petroleum energy.

Clean energy is already cost effective, and employs more people than all other forms of electricity generation combined.

I call on Congressman Fitzpatrick and Senators Casey and Toomey to demand action be taken to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and meet our obligations to the Paris Climate Treaty.

David Meiser, Pipersville
Co-Founder Bucks Environmental Action

Congress should pass the TRUMP Act now

Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, and Senators Toomey and Casey should join other members of Congress and pass the TRUMP Tax Returns Uniformly Made Public Act would require the Internal Revenue Service to disclose the federal income tax returns of candidates for federal office, cabinet secretaries, and the incumbent office holders.

Here are some excerpts:
- The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) shall post federal income tax returns of all candidates for federal office.

- The IRS shall post federal income tax returns of all individuals nominated to serve as federal judges or executive branch cabinet secretaries.

- The IRS shall post the candidates' and nominees' federal income tax returns for the previous five years.

- The IRS shall redact social security numbers, home addresses and phone numbers.

- No exceptions shall be made for federal income tax returns that are being audited.

- No exceptions shall be made for any reason.

Steve Bacher
Newtown Township

HISTORY LIVES

Susan Abramson: Doylestown Historical Society



Doylestown 1917-1918. The local chapter of the Red Cross poses with mascot. During the United States participation in World War I, the organization mobilized some 8 million volunteers across the country, with President Woodrow Wilson acting as honorary chairman for the group.

Doylestownhistorical.org

Send us letters

Send letters to P.O. Box 685, Lahaska 18931, or bridget@buckscountyherald.com or fax to 215-794-1109. Letters may be edited for clarity and to fit space available. Brevity is appreciated. Only signed letters will be used and a phone number must be submitted with a letter.