

A lesson learned through humility and fifth-graders

I know what alliteration is, darn it!

Probably every contestant on Fox TV's "Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?" left the set knowing that they knew the answer that doomed them to eternal humiliation.

And truly, I do know what alliteration is. But overthinking has always been a weakness. Drove my teachers nuts.

"But Mrs. Delasin, if you read the question this way, the answer is 'C,' and if you read it another way, the answer is 'A.'"

So last week, I volunteered as a contestant for Thomas Holtzman Elementary School's annual "Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?" The event prepares parents and kids for the PSSAs, the state's annual achievement tests.

Holtzman principal Mike Selve-

nis and staff devised their game show as an alternative to the standard workshop that — let's face it — rarely attracts parents in droves.

The Holtzman approach works. About 125 parents and what seemed like 5,000 kids jammed the auditorium. It ran just like the TV show, with Selvenis playing host Jeff Foxworthy, and assistant principal Jessica Jacobs providing commercials in the form of PSSA-preparation tips.

The Holtzman fifth-graders — Jacqueline Pedlow, Noah Brooks, Daniel Morris, John Ferguson, Jennifer Mai, Robert Cruz, Gwendolen Truax, Annie Stine, Aviva Jenkins and Ehi Jatto — who served as foils, were all smart and personable. Maybe my first choice as helper/opponent should have been a kid who claimed math or science as a favorite subject. But I just had to



M. Diane McCormick

COMMENTARY

give a shout out to Jacqueline, who said she'd like to be a journalist when she grows up.

A journalist. A nice, old-fashioned idea.

Fortunately, Jacqueline also is a math whiz. She helped me survive the third-grade math question, "Which group contains three letters with only one line of symmetry each?"

Line of symmetry? No Wikipedia handy for a quickie definition. Jac-

queline chose "V, M, A," and I went along. Phew. We were right.

With no more cheats left, I didn't do so poorly. Of course the Earth's rotation on its axis makes the sun and moon seem to move across the sky.

"You're up to \$1,000 that you will not receive at the end of this game show," Selvenis said.

Selvenis peeked at my whiteboard and just had to note that Jacqueline had it all over me in handwriting. Even as "little miss super student," handwriting was always my downfall.

But my Waterloo tonight? Fourth-grade reading. I hang my head in shame.

"Twisting, turning, twirling, down is an example of (A) personification, (B) alliteration, (C) hyperbole, (D) nonfiction."

Had the question been worded "includes an example of," I'd have

been fine. But I stalled on the word "down." My thought process: "Down" is not alliterative, making the whole phrase nonalliterative. Maybe in some fifth-grade universe, twisting, turning, twirling, down represents a kind of hyperbolic progression.

I tried to argue while the audience applauded the genius of my opponent at that point, the delightful Daniel (hey, that's alliterative). Selvenis countered that "Peter picked pumpkins in a garden" is still alliteration.

Not totally. But there's no arguing with computer-graded PSSA questions.

And there's a lesson in my humiliation. Kids are really smart. As for parents and grandparents — we've burned a lot of brain cells since fifth grade, but we can still use what's left to help kids make the most of their school years.

HARRISBURG

Community soul



JESSICA SPRAJCAR, The Patriot-News

Delta Sigma Theta alumnae Diane White, front row on left, moves to the fast-paced music at the Community Soul line dance class.

Dance class is exercise alternative

BY JESSICA SPRAJCAR
For The Patriot-News

Looking for a way to shed excess pounds while sharing some fun and fellowship?

The Community Soul line dancing class is a place to do just that.

Held 6:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesdays at the Boys & Girls Club of Central Pennsylvania at 1227 Berryhill St., the free class sets aerobic dance moves to hip-hop, R&B, jazz and gospel.

Barbara Edmonds and her daughter, Clarice Cox, come to the classes together.

"It gives me something to do," said Edmonds, 67. "After watching my soaps all day, it gets me off the couch. I love it."

The class began in 2007 through efforts of the Harrisburg alumnae chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority. One of the sorority's goals is physical and mental health. It opted for dancing, a fun, easy, family-friendly exercise.

More than 200 weekly participants agree, and that number continues to grow.

Anita Sweet, from Rocky Mount, N.C., was visiting her sister in Harrisburg when she heard about the dance class.

"I attend classes like this in

North Carolina, and I have never seen a crowd as large as this before," Sweet said.

Kristal Turner-Childs, motivational speaker and owner of Eyes Wide Open LLC, was one of the sorority members involved from the beginning and is the dance instructor.

"We were looking for an alternative to traditional exercise; someplace where people can come together in a fun environment," Turner-Childs said.

The Delta Sigma Theta alumnae chapter covers room rental costs so that the class can remain free for everyone.

Delta Sigma Theta Harrisburg alumnae chapter was incorporated in 1958. It has more than 100 members and a continuing tradition of public service.

"Back when I was in high school, some of the sorority sisters came into the class and encouraged us to go to college. There are a lot of sorority sisters here in this room right now. It's a real family affair," said Diane White, class member and sorority member.

Young and old alike can find the dance moves challenging, yet rewarding.

Dwayne Gilchrist has attended the classes from the beginning. Now he brings his



TURNER-CHILDS

two children along.

"These classes bring everyone together," Gilchrist said. "It's a good social gathering and is positive for the community — something that is really needed."

As the popularity of the Community Soul line dance continues to grow, the class has moved to various locations.

The class was held in the gym at Camp Curtin Elementary School in Harrisburg until recently when the Harrisburg school board decided to start charging a \$400 rental fee.

The Boys & Girls Club then offered its facility.

SENIOR EVENTS

HARRISBURG

Jewish Community Center Senior Adult Club, 3301 N. Front St., 236-9555, ext. 3115

• Activities: yoga, water exercise, dance aerobics, tai chi for arthritis, discussion group, chair support exercise and chorus.

• Tuesday: after-lunch program, musical program with Lou Kerner and Melvin Michaels.

• Thursday: after-lunch program, "Thursdays Save A Life" motorcyclist awareness presentation by Alliance of Bikers Aimed Towards Education.

LOWER PAXTON TWP.

Friendship Senior Center,

5000 Commons Drive, 657-1547

• Daily: lunch, 11:30 a.m., reservations required.

• Activities: light aerobics, aqua-cise, line dancing, walking, crocheting, bingo, Bible study, mah-jongg lessons, bridge club and tai chi.

• Dec. 3 and 10: AARP safe driver program, for those age 55 and older, 8 a.m.-noon. Cost is \$12 for AARP members and \$14 for others. Registration: 657-1547.

SUSQUEHANNA TWP.

Susquehanna Twp. Senior Center, 1900 Linglestown Road, 909-9228

Open 10 a.m.-2 p.m. daily with

board and card games, computer use, book swap and light refreshments.

• Activities: walking for health, exercise for arthritis, Scrabble and Yahtzee club, canasta and pinocle.

SWATARA TWP.

The Rutherford House, 3300 Parkview Lane, 564-5682, www.rutherfordhouse.org

Offers lunch at noon weekdays. Register two days in advance.

• Activities: line dancing, low-impact exercise, blood pressure checks, tai chi, dance lessons, bridge, pinocle and aerobics.

• Dec. 3: Bingo, 12:30 p.m.

• Dec. 7: Red Hotties, 1 p.m.

LOWER PAXTON TWP.

Sewer budget includes \$16 rate increase

A sewer rate increase of \$16 a year or 3.5 percent was approved by the Lower Paxton Twp. Sewer Authority on Tuesday. Household and apartment sewer bills will rise from \$116 a quarter to \$120.

The rate decision followed approval of a \$12.3 million operating budget. The budget includes \$20,000 for an audit of the City of Harrisburg Sewer Authority, an expense also to be incurred by other municipalities with Harrisburg Authority agreements. The budget also includes an additional \$25,000 for litigation as well as capital expenses to maintain and improve sewer lines.

The sewer authority might need to revisit the budget after rates are received from the Harrisburg Sewer Authority on Wednesday.

— Jeannette Archer-Simons, For The Patriot-News

MUNICIPAL ROUNDUP

HIGHSPIRE

• **Borough Council on Nov. 16** passed a resolution to petition the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board to waive its amplified sound rules for Champions Sports Bar, which has an outdoor deck, and allow Highspire's less restrictive ordinance to apply. The Liquor Control Board has waived the rule for Champions twice previously.

• **Mayor John Hoerner** presented the Highspire Fire Department with a gift of pet oxygen masks from borough residents Marylou, Samuel Jr. and Samuel Ritter III.

• **Borough Council voted to authorize** the borough code enforcement officer and borough manager to enter into a payment plan upon request for payment of the rental unit inspection fee for owners with more than 10 rental units in the borough. The council enacted an ordinance in August requiring tri-annual rental unit inspections and an accompanying \$75 fee.

LOWER PAXTON TWP.

• **Six cheerleaders** were recognized by the Public Safety Department and the board of supervisors for helping with the Township Night Out in August. Abby Smith, Callie Morton, Christina McCart-

ney, Jessie Peske, Madison Coleman and Rachel Smith picked up trash during and after the event. They each received a certificate of appreciation from the township.

• **Cub Scout Pack 23** from St. Catherine Labouré School was recognized for its attendance at a township meeting to work on their Wolf Badges. The Scouts included Alex Barry, Alex Thoi, Michah Seeton, Nolan Willoughby, Chase Maddigan, Evan Daley, Chase Maynard, Daniel Kreis and Gavin Reyes. Their troop leaders were Julie Willoughby and Pam Seetoo.

• **Brandon Fuller**, from Boy Scout Troop 11, also was recognized for attendance at the township meeting to work on the Communication Badge. He is completing the final requirements for his Eagle Scout Award.

• **Applications to fill vacant advisory board** positions are available online at www.lowerpaxtonpa.gov or at the township office, 425 Prince St. Appointments to advisory board positions will begin Jan. 1.

• **An agreement to increase the engineering services** relative to Linglestown corridor was approved with Arora and Associates PC for an additional \$30,199 to support design review.

• **A municipal planning agree-**

ment with Dauphin County was approved for \$1,250 to provide municipal advisory services for planning, subdivision and land development in the township.

• **A special workshop meeting on the budget** and the possibility of raising taxes will be held at 6 p.m. Dec. 7 at the township building prior to the regular business meeting.

• **A credit of \$32,367 for sewer fees** was approved for Lakewood Hills, minus normal fees. A building in the complex was destroyed in a 2003 fire and never rebuilt. The complex continued to pay for sewer connections as a formal request to disconnect was never made to the township.

• **Township engineers have proposed a plan** to save trees in the Fox and Catherine street neighborhoods while still upgrading the sewer system. Residents had asked supervisors last month to reconsider a plan to condemn some property to upgrade the 40-year-old sewer system. Engineers have recommended the authority line sewer lines instead of replacing them. Officials said the option would save about \$120,000 in paving and traffic related costs and would minimize digging that would have destroyed trees.

— Compiled by Daniel Walmer and Jeannette Archer-Simons

SCHOOL ROUNDUP

SUSQUEHANNA TWP.

• **American Reading Company reported that a project** to raise reading scores in every school had launched. Three hundred books are being delivered to every classroom in the district and teachers are learning new strategies for teaching reading and making it fun. According to the research presented, students who read 20 minutes more per day will

do better in school and score better on tests. The project involves the students in choosing to read more and gets families involved by sending books home. The district received \$433,000 in federal and state grants to launch the project.

• **The Pennsylvania School Board Association** reported that it has started a complete review of the board policies and practices. They were hired to update

the school policies to clarify areas that are confusing, eliminate duplication and conflicting policies and add practices that are required by law. The goal is to have well developed policies that are proactive and not reactive. The first draft is scheduled to be presented to the board in April.

— Compiled by Jeannette Archer-Simons

ON CAMPUS

• The following Gettysburg College students from the Harrisburg area are studying abroad: **Anna Conrad**, Spain; **Christina Kay**, Austria; **Malisa Moody**, Italy; and **Bradley Smith**, Australia.

• Widener Law Harrisburg campus graduates **Matthew Sembach**, **Kathryn Schweitzer**, **Lisa Hopkins**, **Elizabeth Marx** and **Stephen Matzura**, all of Harrisburg, took oaths as new attorneys in a ceremony in the courtroom of the Supreme Court in the Pennsylvania Capitol. Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Thomas Saylor spoke.

IN UNIFORM

• **Navy Seaman Mitchell Hile**, son of Heather Hile of Dillsburg and Ken Hile of Harrisburg, completed U.S. Navy basic training at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill. He is a 2007 graduate of Northern High School.

Whooping cough vaccinations available

Rite Aid pharmacists are offering whooping cough vaccinations for adults who have not received a booster since childhood or adolescence.

Patients are advised to call first for prices. Some insurance might cover the

cost. Walk-in appointments also are available.

The vaccinations are available at Rite Aid at: 2103 N. Third St., Harrisburg, 236-4208; 2604 Linglestown Road, Lower Paxton Twp., 540-4310; 1941 Derry St., Harrisburg, 234-3350; 337 W.

Chocolate Ave., Hershey, 533-2941; 1137 Market St., Le-moyne, 737-3359; 5277 Simpson Ferry Road, Mechanicsburg, 766-2533; and 7036 Wertzville Road, Mechanicsburg, 697-3450.

— From Patriot-News staff reports