

COMMUNITY | A8

DOYLESTOWN'S

Columnist Carl LaVO looks back on the extraordinary week in 1938 when Doylestown relived its first century



SPORTS | B1

MARCH

Villanova nabs a No. 1 seed. Check out the rest of the field, plus, fill out your bracket!

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Bucks students to join walkout

By Chris English

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Hundreds and perhaps thousands of public and private school students from throughout Bucks County plan to participate in Wednesday morning's national walkout.

The event, starting at 10 a.m. and lasting 17 minutes, is being staged in support of stronger gun laws and other safety measures

in the aftermath of the Feb. 14 shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The duration is in honor of the 17 students and staffers killed in Parkland.

At most county schools, administrators and teachers are supporting the action and are working with students to stage the event in a way that allows for free expression but also ensures

The one exception is the

county's largest school district, Central Bucks, where Superintendent John Kopicki said the school board and administrators are not supporting the walkout, but do not intend to discipline students who participate.

"We're here to support our kids, but I cannot recommend or endorse our kids walking out of school," he said. "That would put them in an environment where it would very difficult to guarantee safety, and that is our first responsibility."

Officials from the Bristol Township, Centennial, Council Rock, New Hope-Solebury, Palisades, Pennridge and Pennsbury school districts said they are supporting the students participating in the walkout and have organized events with a eye toward safety, though they didn't want to disclose too many specific measures for fear of compromising safety.

Walkouts at Council Rock's

two high schools, Council Rock North in Newtown Township and Council Rock South in Northampton, will be confined indoors for safety reasons, district spokeswoman Susan O'Grady said.

"Student activity will be proactively organized and fully supervised by CRSD administrators, teachers and safety personnel," she said.

See WALKOUT, A2

Charter Day



Hannah Pothen, 14, left, her sister Divya, 11, and their mother Elizabeth, of Philadelphia, watch as Valerie Long, of Bensalem, demonstrates how to produce wool at Pennsbury Manor in Falls on Sunday during Charter Day festivities. [PHOTOS BY DAVE HERNANDEZ / PHOTOJOURNALIST]

Pennsbury Manor hosts rare look at PA's first governing documents

isitors to Pennsbury Manor on Sunday were able to take in the sights and sounds of 17thcentury Pennsylvania as part of Charter Day. The event featured the display of "The Great Law," a rare six-page document written by William Penn in 1682. The pages, handwritten by William Penn, are the first governing documents of Pennsylvania and allow for freedom of religion.

Penn's recreated country estate in Falls borrowed "The Great Law" from the state's archives to display on Charter Day as part of the manor's year-long commemoration of the 300th anniversary of Penn's death.

Charter Day celebrations are staged throughout the state each March to celebrate the 45,000-acre land grant Penn received 337 years ago from English King Charles II. The acreage later became the foundation of the state of Pennsylvania.

During Sunday's event, visitors met with Penn, participated in colonial demonstrations like blacksmithing

See CHARTER DAY, A2



Blacksmiths Bob Whalen, right, and Max Peysakhov, both of Langhorne, demonstrate how to repurpose a horseshoe and how to make tools at Pennsbury Manor in Falls on Sunday during Charter Day festivities.

Helpline workers inspire others

Suicide prevention volunteers encourage others to donate time

By Christian Menno cmenno@theintell. com@cmenno_intell

Maria Wilson says her life has been marked by periods of darkness and light.

The brightest lights come from her husband and two teenage sons.

Three moments, however, made her wonder if her life would remain forever shrouded. Two

See VOLUNTEERS, A2



Maria Picciotti (left), call center coordinator with the Family Service **Association, and volunteer Maria Wilson of Lower** Makefield set up a handsfree headset at the suicide prevention hotline call center in Middletown.

[BILL FRASER / STAFF PHOTOJOURNALIST]

NEWS | A12

is heading for the region. How badly will our region be

LOTTERY

NEW JERSEY 5 Card Cash: A♣-A♥-10♣-4♦-4♠

Pick 3: 7-0-4, Fireball: 8 Pick 4: 3-7-6-9, Fireball: 8 Cash 5: 08-14-26-29-35, Xtra: 2

Midday Pick 3: 8-3-0, Fireball: 4

Midday Pick 4: 3-4-7-2, Fireball: 4 **PENNSYLVANIA**

Cash 5: 13-26-32-36-40 **Match 6 Lotto:** 12-22-24-32-35-49 Pick 2 Day: 2-2, Wild: 2

Pick 2 Evening: 1-4, Wild: 0 **Pick 3 Day:** 6-5-9, Wild: 2 Pick 3 Evening: 8-5-1, Wild: 0 Pick 4 Day: 6-3-3-6, Wild: 2

Pick 4 Evening: 6-6-1-8, Wild: 0 Pick 5 Day: 5-3-4-1-0, Wild: 2

Pick 5 Evening: 8-4-2-3-4, **Treasure Hunt:** 03-04-05-07-13

MULTISTATE Powerball (3-10-18): 43-44-54-61-69, Powerball: 22 Mega Millions (3-9-18): 7-17-18-46-66, Mega Ball: 22 Cash4Life (3-8-18): 06-34-36-44-55, Cash Ball: 4

ONLINE POLL

Sunday's result: Was trading Torrey Smith for Daryl Worley the right move for the Eagles?

Yes: 64% No: 36%

Today's question: Do you fill out an NCAA men's basketball tournament bracket? 1.) Yes 2.) No

Vote online at buckscounty couriertimes.com





Elizabeth Logue, right, 13, and her sister Emily, 16, of Levittown, pet a horse at **Pennsbury Manor in Falls on Sunday during Charter Day** festivities. IPHOTOS BY DAVE HERNANDEZ / PHOTOJOURNALIST]



A tour guide speaks about William Penn's home at Pennsbury Manor in Falls.

CHARTER DAY

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and beer brewing and watching costumed interpreters re-enact "Voyage of the Welcome." The story retraces the journey Penn and other prospective colonists made to Pennsylvania in 1682 on a ship called The Welcome. As part of the celebration, manor representatives collected canned goods from visitors to donate to the Bucks County Housing Group's Penndel Food Pantry.

WALKOUT

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But one student said she and others aren't going along with staying inside the schools.

"A couple days ago, the superintendent (Robert Fraser) sent out an email that said there will be designated areas inside the school where the students can walk to," said Council Rock South sophomore Krupa Mysore. "But the students do not agree and will be outside the school."

O'Grady responded that district administrators will discuss in the coming days whether to discipline students who go outside.

Krupa said she believes the walkout will be a powerful event.

"Though I've heard some students say it won't do anything, the majority of us believe there is power in numbers and that is why we are participating," she said. "I am hoping that all the high schools participating in the walkout will send a message to Washington for stricter gun laws."

Pennsbury High School student Reed Markowitz previously said he also feels it's important for students March 14 will have a greater who have grown up in an era of mass shootings to speak out.

"I've witnessed so many mass shootings, too many," he said. "We really need to talk about this."

Pennridge High School's walkout will take the form of a memorial service for the 17 Parkland victims, freshman Aidan McGinnis said.

"We didn't want it to necessarily be a political thing because some students were uncomfortable with that," he said. "We wanted it to be something all the students could get behind, but we also want to show we care and don't take things like school shootings lightly."

The Pennridge event is conditioned on approval from the school board, which will consider the matter at a special meeting Monday night, district spokesman Joe Ferry said.

While the walkout is being billed as primarily a high school event, Bristol Township School District Superintendent Melanie Gehrens wrote in a letter to parents and guardians that schools other than Harry S. Truman High School might participate.

"While I expect that

impact on our upper grades, I do not want to dismiss or discount the rights and voices of our younger students who may be acutely aware of current events," Gehrens wrote. "This is an opportunity for students to exercise their First Amendment rights, which are at the core of our democracy."

Students at Bensalem High School and the private George School in Middletown will not have a chance to participate, officials at those schools said. Wednesday is a staff development day in the Bensalem district and students won't be in schools, and George School students are on spring break.

Quakertown Community School District officials declined to comment on whether there will be any walkout event there on Wednesday.

But in a recent blog post on the school district's website, Quakertown Superintendent Bill Harner wrote that the walkout is "an extraordinary educational opportunity for students to learn about their First Amendment rights and see the importance of being involved in our democracy."

Neshaminy School District spokesman Chris Stanley first said plans were being made to organize a safe walkout, but later said "we do not have any definitive plans or indications that a walkout will actually occur at the high school."

This news organization was unsuccessful in attempts to reach Conwell-Egan Catholic High School, Morrisville School District and Bristol Borough School District officials for comment.

Gary Zimmaro, president of Archbishop Wood Catholic High School in Warminster, said Wednesday is seventhgrade visitation day at the school and most Wood students won't be there. However, Zimmaro said Parkland victims will be recognized during an 8:30 a.m. prayer service and again at 10 a.m. with a moment of silence.

Administrators from the county's three public technical schools, Bucks County Technical High School (Bristol Township), Middle Bucks Institute of Technology (Warwick) and Upper Bucks County Technical School (Bedminster) all said they are supporting students who

want to participate in the walkout and have cooperated with them in organizing events. A spokeswoman for the Catholic all-girls high school Villa Joseph Marie in Northampton said the same thing.

Middle Bucks Institute of Technology Administrative Director Kathryn Strouse said students plan to gather outside to read all the names of the Parkland victims and observe a moment of silence. If there is inclement weather, students instead will just walk out into hallways, she said.

Upper Bucks County Technical School Executive Director Bern Wagenseller said the plan there is for students to walk out of classes and to the cafeteria.

"There will be a slide show and some speakers," he said. "One thing we're asking is they don't go running out of the building where potential harm could be waiting. With all the bad things happening today, I don't want to set our students up for harm."

"I'm a child of the 60's," Wagenseller added. "I grew up during the Vietnam War and it was very important for us as young people to be heard, and I don't think that has changed."

VOLUNTEERS In 2017 alone, Family Service volunteers

From Page A1

of Wilson's brothers took their own life — one in 1989, the other in 2010. A short time after, she too attempted suicide inside her Lower Makefield home.

"It was my period of darkness," she said. "My husband saved my life."

Her family, along with her faith and years of therapy, has helped Wilson to focus on the light, she said.

And now, as a volunteer with Family Service Association's CONTACT Helpline and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, she is convincing others to do the same, one phone call at a time.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, 259 Bucks County residents died by suicide between 2014 and 2016. An average of 123 suicides occur each day across the country, reports the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

"I knew that I needed to do something," said Wilson, "but I just never had the courage. I just felt like I needed to be out there and put my own experiences with my own depression out there. I knew that I at least needed to be an ear for people."

She saw an item in the newspaper about Family Service's training courses and signed up.

The 40 hours spent learning how to recognize key indicators and role playing to help handle a variety of scenarios was intense, said Wilson.

"I had never been through anything like that," she recalled. "I felt like my eyes were opened up that much more."

For the last two-anda-half years, Wilson has been fielding calls from Family Service's office in Middletown.

answered about 15,000 calls to the CONTACT Helpline and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Recent national media coverage of the hotlines has led to a greater awareness and an uptick in calls, officials report. In some months, volunteers have taken upwards of 2,000 calls.

Calls to the CONTACT Helpline come from people of all ages, Wilson said. A majority come from people known as "regulars" who call anywhere from once a week to several times each

Often, the regulars are just hoping to talk about their day.

Most suffer from anxiety and social disorders. Some are afraid to even leave their homes.

But many are just lonely. "There's an extensive amount of loneliness on the other end of these calls," said Haley Faust, a 22-year-old Villanova student who answers calls for Family Service in Lower Merion, Montgomery County. She was trained in Bucks County last summer.

"Some people – if it weren't for the helpline, nobody would know that they woke up in the morning."

After she passed the background checks and completed the seven-week training course, Faust asked her instructor what she could expect during a typical shift.

That question, she'd soon learn, was impossible to answer.

Faust says she's received calls from children as young as 10 to a woman age 89.

"I've had shifts where I'd only speak to two regular callers and all the rest were crisis or suicide calls," she said.

Calls into the suicide prevention hotline are signaled by a different ringtone than the CONTACT Helpline.

It was the suicide prevention ringtone Faust heard on her first volunteer shift, on her very first

Through the phone line came only the sound of weeping.

After a few moments, a woman spoke. She was driving alone, thinking about ways to kill herself.

A chill shot up Faust's shoulders. Immediately, she said, her heart jumped to her stomach.

"My face felt so hot. I don't sweat really ever and I was sweating profusely," Faust said.

But she couldn't let any of this come across to the caller.

"You have to remain confident in the fact that they want to be saved. Otherwise they would not have called," Faust said. "You can't think about anything else."

She knew that every minute she was able to keep the woman talking

was another minute alive. The call lasted nearly two hours.

The woman explained how she felt consumed by guilt. Guilty for raising her older children amid an unstable relationship with their father. Guilty for working a night shift that allowed limited time spent with her younger children.

Faust said she attempted to express how incredible she thought the woman was, raising a family while working. She told her that cellphone-absorbed teenagers taking their mother for granted was a normal occurrence. Together, they discussed ways she could help strengthen her relationship with all her children.

Faust stayed on the phone until she heard the woman turn the car around, pull back into her driveway and walk inside.

Afterwards, Faust said she almost passed out while writing the risk assessment report as the adrenaline pumped through her body. Her shift over, she got into her started to sob.

"I told her, 'Mom, I just saved somebody's life for tonight,'" Faust recalled. "That's really all it is, though - for one night. It all kind of like hit me at once. That's the kind of thing you need to hold on to when you do these hours and hours of calls where you hear these horrible things regularly ... I was so grateful to have been the person on the other end of the phone."

Fortunately, Faust didn't need to call 911 that night – something she has had to do only one time. Volunteers make the judgement to call emergency responders on a case-by-case basis and are required to inform the caller that they have done so.

Neither Faust nor Wilson has ever had a call end with suicide, they say. And volunteers quickly understand that closure is not something often afforded to them.

Sometimes, though, they get an assurance from a caller.

"An 18-year-old told me the other day, 'I want you to know, tonight you didn't just save one life, you saved thousands because I plan on making a difference," said Faust.

Family Service is holding another training session this month and while new volunteers are always sought, the role is not for everyone.

Keeping yourself mentally stable – even if it means taking some time off from the call center is key. Faust said she owes it to the next person who calls to be at her best.

Wilson, is huge.

Wilson and her family agreed that she would not come home directly after fielding calls. She now takes time to decompress at the facility to let the adrenaline fade.

Both of Wilson's sons have the helpline number in their phones.

car, called her mother and Help is out there

To reach Family Service Association's CONTACT Helpline between the hours of 8 a.m. and 10 p.m., call 215-355-6000.

To reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which operates 24 hours per day, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Those interested in being trained as a volunteer and answering calls for a minimum of eight hours per month, email volunteer@ fsabc.org, call 215-757-6916, ext. 202, or complete the online application at www. fsabc.org/volunteer. The Bucks County Suicide Prevention Task Force is holding its third annual #HoldOnYouMatter Walk to Fight Suicide Sunday, April 22, at Bucks County Technical High School in Bristol Township. To register online or to find out how to donate, visit www.

"I've always encouraged them to have relationship with other adults that they trust – and if it's not me, that they talk to somebody" if they're having problems, she said. "I never have to know (if they call). It's not about that. It's about

lenapevf.org/bcsptf-walk.

being safe. "I think the biggest thing is that people don't know that there's help available. They feel like they can't go on or are just so overwhelmed. I don't think people take it seriously enough that when someone says something they might actually do something."

Wilson says she wishes she had known about the Self-care, added hotlines before her own suicide attempt.

And she knows how much courage it takes to take that step to even pick up the phone and bare your soul to a stranger.

"And I always tell them thank you," she said. "Thank you for not giving up. Thank you for knowing that you're not alone."

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