

Community Center News



Vol. I, No. 1

Callicoon, NY

Spring/Summer 1988

“Community” or “Youth” Center

By TOM RUE

There is a rich heritage contained in the organizational records of the Delaware Community Center. Over the years, much community goodwill and cooperation has

focused on this particular tract of land, situated at the confluence of a major free-flowing river and a prime trout stream.

In a 1964 address, former Town of Delaware historian Valleau Curtis quoted his great-grandfather, James C. Curtis' description of the location:

The local terrain presented an entirely different picture in 1750 than it does today. Along this river bottom land stood groves of sturdy white pine trees towering 150 feet into the air and measuring five to six feet in diameter. One such grove stood where the Callicoon Creek flowed into the Delaware River.

Originally, the area included a farm owned by Silas Traynor and a small tract owned by James I. Curtis. Early in this century, people began using the spot for sandlot baseball and other forms of informal and organized recreation.

The Delaware Athletic Association, Inc. was organized on November 14, 1931 by the following incorporators: John F. Lynch, George R. Mills, Neil Tobin, C.P. Kautz and Charles E. Lewis, all of Callicoon.

Purposes of the association included “the establishment and equipping, maintaining and operating of community buildings, playgrounds, swimming pools, recreational areas and structures for all...educational and recreational means, for the use of the members of the community,” according to the certificate of incorporation.

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Photo courtesy of Mary Curtis

Taken in 1916 on what is now known as the Delaware Community Center field. Right to left, Front row: Charles Engert, Arthur Dering, Harold Persbacker, Percy Hill, Matt Collins, manager; Back row: Wat Tyler, Norman Persbacker, William Kenny, Cornelius Graebner, Corwin Valentine, Clarence Fortnam; Very back: Etta Kothe.

Published history coming

Together with Delaware town historian Mary Curtis, the board of directors is planning a paperback history telling the story of the Delaware Community Center. The booklet's release is targeted to coincide with the 40-year anniversary of the swimming pool dedication and 25-year “silver” anniversary of Hermann Hall.

Local businesses will have the opportunity to sponsor display ads in the history, and individuals will be able to contribute as boosters, sponsors, or patrons of the Center.

If you have old photographs, clippings, documents, memories, or other contributions to share, please write to: Historical Booklet, Delaware Community Center, P.O. Box 354, Callicoon NY 12734.

Membership drive

As a local resident you are invited to become a member of the Delaware Community Center. Membership entitles your family to free use of the swimming pool. Even if you don't swim and have no children, we hope you will make a tax-deductible contribution.

Classes of membership are:

BASIC MEMBER	\$35 - \$100
BOOSTER	\$100 - \$200
SPONSOR	\$200 - \$500
PATRON	\$500 or more

See application inside

Prospectus

Community Center News is published by Delaware Youth Center, Inc., P.O. Box 354, Callicoon, NY 12723.

It is mailed free to residents in the towns of Delaware, Fremont, and Cohecton in New York; and Damascus Township, Pennsylvania. Additional copies are available upon request.

Board of Directors

Name	Residence	Occupation
Tom Rue, president	Milanville, PA	Probation officer
Jane Buddenhagen, vice president	Hortonville, NY	Guidance counselor
Joyce Sykes, secretary	Callicoon, NY	Insurance agent
Barry Schuchman, treasurer	Damascus, PA	Restaurant owner
Roe Bedford	Callicoon, NY	Homemaker
Holly Keyser	Callicoon, NY	Phys-ed teacher
Clarence Kratz	Hortonville, NY	General store owner
Michele Schuchman	Damascus, PA	Restaurant owner
Pete Sigelakis	Callicoon, NY	Auto mechanic

Greetings:

Since the influx of "new people" began arriving in the river valley 10 or 20 years ago, some residents are not aware of the Delaware Community Center's presence on Creamery Road at the downriver end of Main Street, Callicoon.

The Center is open for use by anyone, without regard to age, race, religion, politics, or state of residence. The summer youth program is free to all youth. If you are not aware of what the facility has to offer, stop by sometime and take a walk around the grounds.

If you have been a long-time friend of the Center, the board of directors wants to stay in touch with you and ask for your continued support, in both energy and financial contributions.

Public comments are always welcome.

Whether there is a second edition of **Community Center News** depends largely on the response we receive from you.



Photo courtesy of Sullivan County Democrat

Refreshing spot

Local children cool off and splash each other in the refreshing waters of the Delaware Community Center. The pool is a popular place to be during the hot summer months.

Use of the swimming pool is free to Center members, as well as participants in the summer youth program.

Sponsor an activity

From time to time one hears comments in the community that more functions ought to take place at the Delaware Community Center — that its full potential is not being realized. The board wholeheartedly agrees and is available to help, but like everyone else, their time is limited.

The Center's program director, Andrew Ranaudo, is paid in part by matching funds from the county. However, Mr. Ranaudo is a full-time faculty member at Delaware Valley Central School and he too can only do so much.

Several youth-oriented events are organized each year by board members and others, but teenagers, parents, senior citizens, religious leaders, and other community members are invited to take the bull by the horns and organize additional parties, dances, community picnics, and such other activities as interest them.

A good example of such self-motivation is seen in Leota Hermann, who for years has been active at the hall. This past winter, she organized a series of card parties and other fund-raisers, attended by members of the Delaware Valley Senior Citizens.

Another is Pete LaFleur, the originator and principal organizer of five annual "Skate-a-Thons" for the Center. Each event has generated close to \$5000 and has been a source of fun and satisfaction for hundreds of youngsters.

Like these, most functions are capable of generating enough to contribute a fair share toward the financial survival of the Center.

Off-premise activities presently planned to benefit the Center include a golf tournament being organized by Roe Bedford; and a banquet, headed up by Pete Sigelakis. Both events are planned to take place at the nearby Villa Roma country club.

To arrange for hall reservations for a community activity or fund-raiser, contact DCC secretary Joyce Sykes who maintains the calendar. She can be reached at home, during evening hours, at (914) 887-4630.

Private functions

Hermann Hall is available for \$250 per day to private renters for wedding receptions, banquets, family reunions, etc. If interested, contact Joyce Sykes



Photo by Lorna Alford

Two employees of Leota Hermann of Callicoon help cater a wedding reception in the Community Center kitchen.

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After World War II, on October 20, 1947, a similar group revitalized itself, with greater involvement by some of the women of the community, as the *Callicoon Aid Center, Inc.*, with purposes similar to the DAA. Its initial board of directors included: Lawrence R. Milk, Howard T. Bullis, Fred W. Stabbert, William Buddenhagen, Frank Davidson, Melvera H. Lovell, William Dexter, Edwin C. Hermann and Arthur L. Geiselman, variously of Callicoon and Hortonville.

A beautiful parcel previously owned by Martin and Elizabeth Hermann, and later by the Callicoon Volunteer Fire Department, was conveyed to the Center on October 30, 1947. A covenant in the deed promised that the property would "at all times hereafter be used as a community recreation center".

In the event that the Center ever ceased to function as such, the deed stated "title to the said premises shall revert back to the Callicoon Volunteer Fire Department, Inc."

Herb Persbacker was listed as fire chief, and William L. Bergner as president of the DAA.

Under Dr. Mills' leadership, following several tragic drownings in the Delaware, a swimming pool was constructed on the site by the Martin Hermann Lumber Co. and numerous community volunteers. The Callicoon Coal Co. did the original plumbing, and Henry Neumann the electrical wiring, according to a Memorial Day 1949 dedication speech by Dr. Mills.

In his remarks, Dr. Mills noted that only with enthusiastic broad-based support of community members could the facility ever have been possible.

"There have been hundreds of man hours spent on this field gratis and to date the Callicoon Aid Center has raised over \$13,000 by contributions, field day, baseball, card and bingo parties. In our drive for funds hundreds of persons contributed as you can see by the fact that there were only 23 donors of \$100 or more — and still we raised \$13,000," Dr. Mills said.

The master of ceremonies at the dedication ceremony was E. T. Rumble, M.D., who worked with Dr. Mills in leading the movement for a community swimming pool.

It seems to have been the clear intent of the pool's builders and original contributors that their labors would primarily benefit the young people of the area. Yet swimming was also open to adults on a limited schedule and at a modest fee.

According to a contemporary account in the *Sullivan County Democrat*: "the first dip in the new pool...was made by Miss Helen Manouse. One of the more personable young ladies of this section, she was attractive in a new bathing suit. Diving from the springboard, she swam the length of the pool in spite of the temperature which was too cold for swimming."

Two years later, on April 25, 1951, a certificate of name change for the organization was filed by Dr. Mills, changing the name of the Callicoon Aid Center to *Delaware Youth Center, Inc.*

On May 16, 1964, Town of Delaware native Grover M. Hermann's generous gift to local people was completed, in the form of an immense community hall. A plaque on the western interior wall states the structure was "dedicated to our youth".

Another marker stands "in memory of everyone who makes this possible," and names four specific individuals:

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Grover Hermann, Valleau Curtis, Carol Brooks, and George R. Mills, M.D.

Over the next 20 years, thousands of valley residents would spend countless wholesome and enjoyable hours at Hermann Hall and on its grounds, in activities including weddings, roller-skating, picnics, organized aerobics, softball games, handball, canoe regattas, field days, public banquets, ice-hockey, basketball, dances, and other recreative and social functions for young and old.

A free young people's summer recreational program was organized in 1984, one-half funded by the NYS Division for Youth through the Sullivan County Youth Bureau.

Financial support is also received from the towns of Delaware and Fremont, for both youth and senior functions.

Andrew Ranaudo, a physical education teacher at Delaware Valley Central School, has directed the summer youth program since its inception.

Since the Center is also home for the Delaware Valley Senior Citizens and other non-"youth" uses, on March 16, 1984, then president Peter LaFleur filed a certificate with the County Clerk, registering the assumed name of *Delaware Community Center*. But the formal, legal name of the not-for-profit corporation which owns the building and grounds remains what it was when the hall was built.

Commitment to the concept of diversified community involvement was recently restated by the present board, on October 13, 1987, when they amended the corporate by-laws to say: "*Amendment I. Hermann Hall shall be open for use by any community group or organization for any purpose not prohibited by law, subject to a fee schedule to be established and periodically revised by and in the discretion of the board of directors.*"

Over the years, there have been moments of crisis for the Community Center. But through consistent private financial support, a spirit of voluntarism and civic pride, this vicinity still possesses one of the most impressive community facilities of any comparably populated area in the bi-state region — as well as a wide range of programs and organized activities.

Weekend at Deer Run Village

Callicoon developer Joe DeFalco has offered any local business owner who contributes \$100 or more to the Delaware Community Center a vacation package at Deer Run Village in Stamford, NY worth over \$400!

Mr. DeFalco met with representatives of the board on February 6, 1988 and **presented a check for \$8000**, and at that time made the additional offer of incentive vacation packages.



Photo courtesy of The River Reporter

Summer in the sun

Heather Baily (center) makes exotic sunglasses out of cellophane and paper at the Delaware Community Center, as Donna and David Baily model pairs of glasses they have already completed.

"All the programs are free, and the kids just show up," said

Andy Ranaudo, director of summer activities.

"We usually have 25 to 30 children here a day," Ranaudo explained, "Counting pre-schoolers and seniors, I estimate that about 500 people benefit from our programs each week."

If check is enclosed, please use an envelope.

From: _____

Number in family: _____

Phone: _____

BASIC MEMBER	\$35 - \$100
BOOSTER	\$100 - \$200
SPONSOR	\$200 - \$500
PATRON	\$500 or more

Enclosed: \$ _____

Comments: _____

Cut & return

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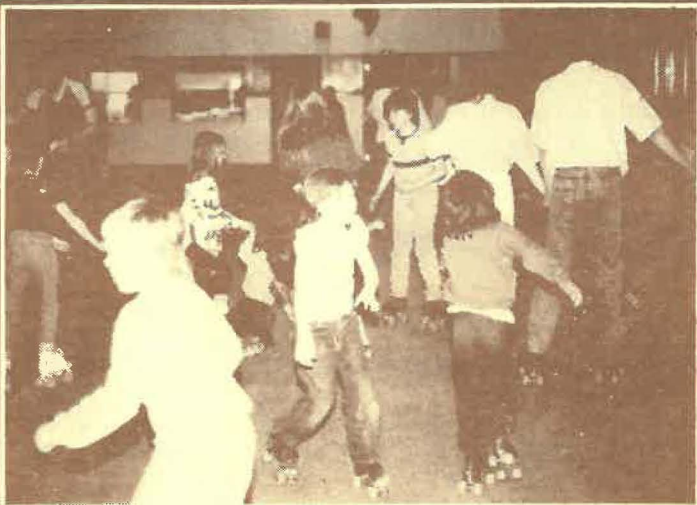


Photo by Tom Rue

Skating your life away

Back in 1964, after the dedication of Hermann Hall, one of the first things the Community Center board did was purchase dozens of pairs of roller-skates.

Since that time, those same skates have been maintained and enjoyed by thousands of valley youngsters and adults. The annual spring Skate-a-Thon is one of the Center's biggest and most consistent fund-raisers.

In addition, regular roller-skating held throughout the year is principally supervised by Phil Jacobi and Sue Terry, both of Callicoon. Parent chaperones are also encouraged.

Since the schedule varies, for information on when skating is planned, call DCC president Tom Rue at (914) 794-3000, ext. 3400 during the day; or at home at (717) 729-7762.

As long as the river flows

A parking lot by the water's edge, for purposes of fishing or launching canoes, sits immediately adjacent to the Community Center.

The Callicoon access is particularly valuable for trout and other fishing due to its prime location at the confluence of the Upper Delaware and Callicoon Creek.

The site is administered under agreements between the the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the National Park Service, and the Community Center which owns it.

Negotiations have now been underway for over a year between the board of directors and the DEC to revise the amount of rent paid by the state for the access.

Under a 1964 lease, the state paid the Youth Center the sum of \$1 for 25 years. The DEC helped townspeople clean up a dump which previously marred the beautiful spot.

But in February 1987, after meeting with DEC officials, the board served notice that the old agreement was cancelled.

Presently, an interim agreement remains in effect, preserving the status quo and ensuring uninterrupted public use of the access, pending negotiation of fair-market rent.

In February 1988, after being told the parcel was not for sale, the DEC offered the Center a lump-sum rental of \$15,000 for the next 20 years, based on its own appraisal.

River users need not fear that the access might fall into private hands. It is the board's unanimous desire that it remain open to recreationists for as long as the river flows.

Letter

Dear Friends,

This is a rather belated response to your "Open Letter" To The Membership of September 8th (1987), in which you requested hearing about our memories of special experiences at the Center.

My wife and I have special fond memories of our first occasion at the Center. It was near the end of our first year here, and we hadn't gotten to know too many people except our immediate neighbors. To our pleasant surprise, we received a written invitation to attend what was called a "Newcomers Reception" at the Center, to be held in December, if memory serves me correctly. We happily agreed to attend.

On the night of the reception, we decided to walk down to the Center, since we lived only a few blocks uptown. Also it had snowed, and we figured parking might be a problem.

It turned out to be a beautiful, clear evening, cold but still. We walked slowly towards the Center, the snow crunching under foot. As we neared the buildings, we were able to see the snow hanging on the evergreens and other trees and shrubs. We had never noticed Hermann Hall before lit up at night. The beautiful stained glass front window up high glowed warmly on the snow-covered trees and grounds, like a winter prism, or a nighttime rainbow against the dark background. We felt as though we were walking into a living Christmas card, transposed from a Currier and Ives original! Both of us felt already welcomed just to be entering such a scene.

The reception was as warm as our first feelings were on approaching the Center. It was a much needed and very satisfying experience to feel really welcomed into the community in such a pleasant way. We realized how very fortunate we, and indeed all of this area were, to have such a beautiful Center to embody the meaning of 'community'.

Sincerely,
Tom Hubers
Callicoon



Photo by Tom Rue

Holiday events

Pictured above, Hortonville magician Glenn Hesters inspires awe in some young spectators at the 1987 annual Christmas party.

Other holiday celebrations include a Halloween parade and an Easter egg hunt. Activities such as these, like the summer program, are free to all youth.

Financial report - 1987**Delaware Youth Center, Inc.****Expenses:**

Phone	\$ 763.19
Electric	2,730.95
Insurance	12,491.56
Payroll (IRS)	1,979.35
Oil (heat)	2,694.08
Repair expenses	9,959.92
Garbage pickup	1,083.50
Bank loans	2,849.56
Advertising	474.50
Postage	175.25
Soda machine	98.90
	\$41,694.50

Income:

Donations	\$23,736.90
Swim lessons	1,095.00
Memberships	6,290.00
Rentals	6,544.00
	\$37,665.90

Summary:

Expenses	\$-41,694.50
Income	+37,665.90
Deficit	-4,028.60

reducing programs for the winter due to the absence of caretakers, as well as financial constraints; and working out a compromise whereby senior citizens would continue to meet in Hermann Hall despite the closure.

Normally, the annual meeting of the Center's membership is held in the month of January.

What is the Board of Directors

According to state law, the role of a board of directors is to manage and direct the business and fiscal affairs of a corporation. Four members of the present Delaware Community Center board were elected by a vote of the general membership on April 22, 1986. The other five have taken office since that time.

Under our By-Laws, the board consists of as many as 9 people whose term of office is three years each. In the past, some have generously served more than one consecutive term, but others have reportedly felt "burned out" by the burdensome responsibilities and little positive feedback they felt they received for their substantial efforts.

None are paid for their work. They consider it an honor to serve the community. Presently, six directors reside in the Town of Delaware in New York State, and three in Damascus Township, Pennsylvania.

But the real life-blood of the programs which take place at the Center are the parents and other community organizers who take an active and assertive role in creating and carrying out functions like roller-skating events, dances, field days, scouting events, and more. Without them, there would be no Center.

Public meeting in November

A public meeting was held by the board of directors on November 12, 1987 in the Center's main hall. Important items of business included discussion of temporarily

Delaware Community Center
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