

# The Kutztown Area Patriot

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Serving the Kutztown, Fleetwood and Brandywine Heights Area School Districts

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## Contract approved

*Hundreds of Brandywine Heights Area School District residents are dismayed when the school board approves the new teachers' contract, 6-3.*

By Mandy Zerr  
Patriot Writer

There was a lot of yelling and there were even a few tears.

The Brandywine Heights Area School Board voted 6-3 to accept an arbitrator-prepared report as the new teachers' contract, despite the loud, opposing shouts of the hundreds of residents that filled the middle school auditorium Nov. 18.

Board members Michael Sacks, Lori Yocco and Roger Bollinger voted against the contract, which calls for a 4 percent pay increase to the district's 150 teachers each year of the four-year agreement. It also includes an employee contribution to health insurance benefits for the first

time ever.

Board president James Mabry, Michael Grossman, Richard Mazich, Robert Lowry, Janice McDermott and Elizabeth Stehman voted in favor of the pact.

The teachers' union had threatened to strike if the report was not accepted by the board. Michael T. Babb, teachers' union president, said a strike-authorization vote would have been conducted the day after the meeting.

But an averted strike was no comfort to taxpayers at the meeting.

"You have destroyed this community," shouted Kathy Duffy to the retreating school board after the vote. "Face this community and be accountable!"

Two security guards, hired by the district, stood close to the board on either side of the auditorium stage as many members left the building through a side door.

"It's shameful," said Wilhelm Roscher, "that the school board did not have the guts to tell teachers no pay raise."

Before the vote, the board was handed a petition signed by 240 residents against the contract, while others at the meeting complained that the 4 percent pay increase was more than taxpayers could handle.

"I look at this as a business," Lloyd Wetzel told the board. "Our business is failing and that should be reflected in the teachers' salaries."

Many also felt the employee benefit contributions don't do enough to suppress increasing health care costs.

According to the contract, employees choosing single coverage will pay \$14 a month, while family

coverage will cost the employee \$40 a month. The costs will go up incrementally each year until single coverage reaches \$24 and family coverage costs \$65.

The report states that this year, the monthly premium cost for a single employee is \$280.14 and \$813.03 for family coverage.

Joan Falcone repeated these numbers and said the teachers' contribution needs to be more.

"It's only a pittance," she said of the \$40-a-month family coverage payment.

Skip McFarland said he works for a major insurance company and pays about 42 percent of his benefits.

"We all work. The norm is to pay a part of our benefits. I urge you to reject this proposal," he told the board. "We elected you to be our representatives. Keep us in mind."

See Contract page 2.



Patriot photo by Eric Veronikis

TAKING A PEEK. Louisa Gosner Library Board of Trustees member Mary Jo Johnson peers at the home of Kutztown University President F. Javier Cevallos and his wife, Josee Vachon. The home will be a highlight of this year's Holiday House Tour.

## Tour is library's major money-raiser

By Eric Veronikis  
Patriot Writer

There is no better way to get into the holiday spirit than by visiting some of the area's most beautiful homes at Christmas time.

The 12th Annual Kutztown Holiday House Tour will feature six of Kutztown's most unique residences.

Sponsored by The Louisa Gosner Public Library, all proceeds from the Dec. 5 event go directly back to the library.

On this year's self-guided tour, guests can visit Barbara and Barry Sokol's two-story colonial house at 58 Sokol Drive and the 105-year-old Tuerk residence at 420 W. Walnut St.

Other stops include Kim and Doug Frederick's Colonial home at 562 N. Kemp St. and Martin Smith and Sandy Green's house at 230 Baldy St.

Each year, an anniversary house is included on the tour also.

The anniversary dwelling is a home that sat on the tour previously, but has been renovated since its last appearance.

Barbara and Steve Dymcheck's cabin at 365 Hottenstein Rd. first appeared on the tour in 1995.

The home has undergone a complete renovation since

guests of the tour saw it last.

Perhaps one of the highlights of this year's tour is the residence of Kutztown University President F. Javier Cevallos, who resides with his wife Josee Vachon and their two children

on campus at 15237 Kutztown Rd.

The brick structure built in 1929 underwent a \$750,000 renovation over the past two years

See Tour page 3.

## Main St. earns B-

By Eric Veronikis  
Patriot Writer

Main Street got a check up on Nov. 18.

James Howard Kunstler, a nationally-recognized author of books on community planning and the decline of Main Streets in America, took a stroll up and down Kutztown's busiest road.

He was joined by several borough council members, borough manager Jaymes Vetraino, historical society members and other residents interested in finding out what advice Kunstler could give on improving Main Street.

Kunstler started his walk at the beginning of West Main Street and worked his way uphill to the edge of Kutztown University.

The critic of architecture had many colorful things to say about a variety of structures, especially the former Social Club headquarters building that now sits empty at 217 W. Main Street

"This is the winner of the ugliest building on Main Street," Kunstler said. "It looks like a forensic pathology lab."

Kunstler told the small group the buildings on Main Street contain a good amount of historical substance.

But many of the facades have been covered with cheap vinyl siding and permastone.

"Look how crummy this window is," Kunstler said as he pointed to a building. "The window looks like what they put in Florida slums."

Some buildings are composed of several different materials, Kunstler said. As he pointed to one business featuring brick, stone and bronze on its exterior, Kunstler said the structure is in conflict with itself.

Following his daytime stroll, Kunstler made his way to KU's Sharadin Hall the same evening.

Kunstler was a featured speaker during the university's Henry William Sharadin Distinguished Lecture Series, sponsored by the College of Visual & Performing Arts.

See Kunstler page 2.

## A brand new Bear Creek

By Eric Veronikis  
Patriot Writer

If you haven't visited Bear Creek Ski Area in a while, you're in for a big surprise.

Aside from the slopes, guests probably will not recognize the ski resort in Macungie upon arrival.

Last March, Bear Creek closed for several weeks.

Construction crews went to work immediately, tearing down the old lodge, ski school and ski rental shop.

In its place sits a new 57,474 square-foot lodge, a 43,970 square-foot hotel, a 7,170 square-foot rental shop and a sports retail and repair shop that is 1,000 square-feet in size.

Bear Creek Marketing Director Jennifer Muhl said when the facilities are complete, the project will have cost approximately \$25 million.

"We knocked down the existing building and put in a 53-room hotel,

See Bear Creek page 2.



Patriot photo by Eric Veronikis

NEW DIGS. Bear Creek General Manager Mark Schroetel and Marketing Director Jennifer Muhl stand in a dining room that looks out onto the slopes.

## Gobble, gobble



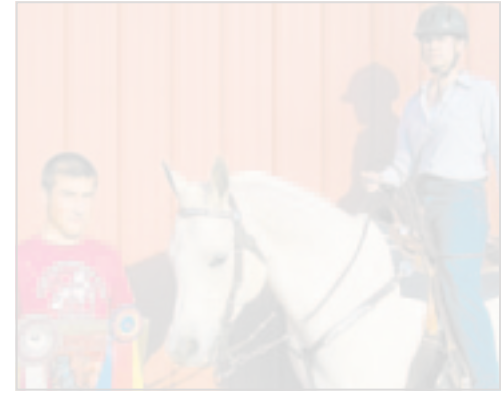
It's that time of year again - time to give thanks and to sit down for a good meal. For Thanksgiving recipes written by area second graders, see pages 15-19.

## Devoted duo



One word that describes Jay and Shirley Leinbach? Devoted. The couple has attended every Kutztown Cougar boys and girls basketball and softball game since 1972. Meet them on page 13.

## Horsing around



F. Freedom's Legacy, recently crowned senior champion stallion in his division at Harrisburg's Arabian Horse Show, didn't always have it so good. See how he worked his way up to the title on page 9.

## History lesson



District-Topton students recently learned all about their ancestors. For scenes from the lesson, see page 8.

## Today's Weather



Partly cloudy. High 53.  
Illustration: Elijah Reyes, age 6.  
Albany Elementary, grade 1.

Winning paper



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# Bear Creek facility boasts many new details

Bear Creek, from page 1.

lodge with banquet facilities that seat up to 300 people and our restaurant is now full service," Muhl said. "The restaurant has slope-side tables and you can see the slopes from the bar."

There are so many new amenities at Bear Creek it is hard to choose where to begin.

Perhaps one of the most practical additions is the placement of locker rooms inside the three-story lodge.

In the old lodge, guests had to suit up on top of each other in various spots throughout the building.

"The lodge looked like a subway station at rush hour," General Manager Mark Schroetel said. "We did so much on the mountain to improve the ski experience and when you can't come into the lodge without being crowded it kind of taints the experience."

The locker rooms are nice, but the hotel is even better.

Dubbed The Inn at Bear Creek, Schroetel and Muhl both said guests are guaranteed to enjoy overnight stays in the hotel that features indoor and outdoor hot tubs, an indoor pool with a slope-side view, rooms and suites with slope and mountain side views and fireplaces, an exercise room, custom-made furniture and more.

"The level of finish is more than we initially anticipated," Schroetel said. "We anticipated an Econo Lodge, but it's more like a Fairmont or Ritz. The juxtaposition between the modern look and the loggy feel is interesting. There are big windows and open spaces."

Each floor of the lodge is equally impressive.

There are five large fireplaces inside for guests to warm up next to and a 5,200 square-foot deck juts out of the rear of the family dining area and The Grille restaurant.

Muhl said with so many new amenities, the resort plans to

begin hosting new events throughout the entire year.

She said wine and beer festivals are in the works and 14 weddings have already been booked for the banquet hall that can be divided into three sections.

The daycare area is larger, additional ticket windows have been added and overall, the entire facility is simply beautiful.

"I think they (guests) are going to be stunned," Schroetel said. "They're not going to believe it's the same place."

Muhl said Bear Creek plans to open Dec. 8 and the hotel will be available for overnight stays as of Dec. 22.

Bear Creek Ski Area is located at 101 Doe Mountain Lane, Macungie. For more information, call Bear Creek at 1-866-SKI-AT-BC or visit [www.skibearcreek.com](http://www.skibearcreek.com).

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Patriot photo by Eric Veronikis

TODAY VERSUS YEARS OF THE PAST. James Howard Kunstler and Brendan Strasser (right) compare old pictures of buildings on West Main Street, Kutztown, with how they look today.

## Kunstler reviews Main St.

Kunstler, from page 1.

The borough, KU and the Kutztown Community Partnership joined together to sponsor Kunstler's two-day visit.

If he were to give Main

Street a grade on a report card, Kunstler said it would receive a B minus.

"There is a tremendous problem with irresponsible landlords," Kunstler said. "Kutztown has a wealth of great historical fabric. You can see

that it's there. But Kutztown needs to have standards of excellence as far as facades are concerned. There has to be guidelines."

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## Residents upset by decision

Contract, from page 1.

After the vote, many taxpayers were dismayed the contract was approved.

"I was so shocked," said Duffy. "I thought the school board would stand up for our community. It (the vote) was a blatant disregard of us."

Many talked among themselves about senior citizens on a fixed income being forced out of their homes and out of the district due to the school's tax rate, which at 26.15 mills, is the highest in the county.

"It's a sad night for many in the district," said Alane Falcone. "This was the deciding vote for many, whether to keep their home or move out."

Board member Michael Sacks, looking downcast and upset, said he was disappointed the contract was approved.

"I think the thought of a strike is what did it," he said. "It is a gamble, but I would rather take the gamble."

Other board members could

not be reached for comment.

Meanwhile, angry residents have vowed to do something.

"We will vote this school board out," said Duffy. "We need a board who will protect us."

Contact Mandy Zerr at [mbz-err@berksmontnews.com](mailto:mbz-err@berksmontnews.com).

### Correction

In an article by Brenda Koehler, Patriot Intern, in last week's issue, Marci Brunner was misquoted. As a hostess at the Kutztown Tavern, she does not wait on tables, make drinks, run register or work in the kitchen.

## New force is formed

The unique needs and special circumstances of stray and injured animals in the streets and countryside of Berks County have led to the formation of a field services department within the Humane Society of Berks County.

The new Department of Animal Protective Services (APS) bring all of the animal control, dog law and cruelty enforcement activities of the Humane Society into a single department.

The APS Department is staffed by four full-time employees, including two Humane Society Police Officers, authorized to enforce the state's anti-cruelty laws, and two APS Officers, authorized to enforce the state's Dog and Rabies laws and local animal-related ordinances.

The Humane Society of Berks County provides emergency injured animal ambulance service and cruelty law enforcement to Berks County.

The Society also provides contracted animal control and stray housing services for the local areas of Albany, District and Maiden creek townships.

More information about the shelter may be found online at [www.berkshumane.org](http://www.berkshumane.org) or by calling 610-921-2348.

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