

St. Patrick's Day, Marian, Jeff, etc.

By **BILL HASTINGS**
Of the Gazette Staff

To whom it may concern —

IRISH POTPOURRI —

Thank goodness, it's Friday ... and in Indiana that means a weekend of parades, planks, parties and your favorite Irish stew.

Anchored by the downtown parade, the St. Patrick's Day weekend — an extended one at that — offers both the Irish and their envious "wannabes" a full schedule of activity, opening this evening with a fun outing for the golfers and stretching through Monday with an Irish testimonial.

A quick peek at the activities:

Tomorrow's 24-unit parade, designed for the Irish (and their impostors) begins at 11 a.m. at Philadelphia and Fifth streets and moves through downtown to Ninth and Philadelphia, where it disbands. The lineup includes bagpipe bands, Irish revelers, civic and youth organizations, antique cars and dance teams, among others.

And don't forget the "early-bird" attraction — the traditional Leprechaun Look-alike Contest at 10:30 a.m. at Spaghetti Benders, where the participants will be invited to march in the parade.

Exit the Irish revelry, enter the Indiana-Armstrong Builders' annual Spring Home Show at the S&T Bank Arena.

Featuring as many as 125 booths and more than 90 vendors, the Home Show opens this evening and continues tomorrow and Sunday afternoon. And with showers in the forecast today, sponsors are looking for a large turnout, especially since the show's founders in years gone by always insisted that "the gloomier the forecast, the larger and more enthusiastic the attendance."

Some tips for those who plan to attend, especially the newcomers:

The S&T Arena is part of the White Township Recreation Park and offers both easy access off East Pike and convenient parking; admission to the show is \$3 for adults; children under age 16 are admitted free; and ticket holders have an opportunity to win multiple prizes totaling \$1,500 in Home Show cash.

■ And if it's sharply played basketball you enjoy, IUP's women's team will host the national (NCAA) regional tournament this weekend at Memorial Field House, where the record-breaking Crimson Hawks encounter Mount Olive (N.C.) at 5:30 this evening. The eight-team tournament continues with the semifinals tomorrow evening and the championship game at 7 p.m. Monday.

Our record-breaking reference? Coach Cindy Martin's Indiana squad rolled up 27 wins this year (27-4), the most in a single season by an IUP women's basketball team.

WEARIN' O' THE GREEN —

The late Irishman Keith Bloom, one of the founders of Indiana's St. Patrick's Day parade, would have relished the news that the community's Patty's Day observance is growing, both in size and in diversity.

In addition to tomorrow's parade and the traditional bashes at local dining and dancing venues, Indiana's St. Patrick's Day weekend this year will include a tribute to Tom and Helen Coyne, who for years hosted what was recognized as the town's major Patty's Day celebration at their former Coyne's Pub.

The Coynes, now retired, have graciously accepted the honor and tentatively plan to attend Monday's celebration at the Best Western lounge, according to restaurateur Joe Medvetz, coordinator of the party.

Mr. Bloom will be honored posthumously at the event, Medvetz says. It was Bloom, the highly respected band director at Marion Center High School, who coordinated the Coyne's Irish parties, scheduling the entertainers and hyping the celebrations with his patented singalongs.

Entertaining at Monday night's turnout at the Best Western (the event runs from 6 to 10 p.m.) will be well-known musicians Terry Sabo, Julianne Laird and Carl Rakkann.

The evening will offer Irish goodies, ethnic foods, the traditional refreshments and, of course, Wearin' O' The Green.

Not to forget those popular singalongs of another vintage:

Medvetz and two other principals of the Two Chefs Restaurant at Best Western — James and Vickie Leather-

INSIDE INDIANA



BILL HASTINGS

wood — will host the event. There will be no cover charge.

MEANWHILE, Quota International's local chapter will kick off the St. Patrick's Day weekend with its third annual St. Patty's Day Open, a nine-hole indoor golf tournament that gets under way with registration at 5:30 this evening at the Upstairs at the Clock.

Play begins at 6 o'clock with a shotgun start.

Teams from downtown businesses — namely The Coyne, Cozumel, Culpeppers, Boomerang's, Al Patti's, Spaghetti Benders and Wolfendales — will join in the Irish fun on the eve of the downtown St. Patrick's Day parade. The entry list will be capped at 36 teams.

Proceeds last year's event raised \$12,000 will go to local charities.

And something new — a hole-in-one contest — has been introduced with Coney Island serving as host and Michael Smith of Massaro Corp. as the sponsor.

DOWN MEMORY LANE —

Gazette sports editor Tony Coccagna points out that ESPN's NCAA women's tournament selection show on Monday will include a feature on the 16th-seeded Harvard team that defeated No. 1-seeded Stanford in the first round of the tournament 10 years ago.

Harvard, he points out, is still the only 16th seed, men or women, to win an NCAA postseason tournament game.

And there's a local touch! That Harvard team of a decade ago included Marion Center High graduate Alison Seanor, who was a senior and a member of the starting team.

OTHER NAMES IN THE NEWS —

■ Marian Panaro of the village of Emigh, a technician in the fiscal department, has been named "Employee of the Month" for March at Indiana-based District 10 of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

■ Holiday bouquets to newly named sergeants William Vovak and Frank Kovacic and new corporal Jeffrey Atherton, who were recently promoted by the Indiana Borough Police Department.

■ Golden quilts to the Gazette's latest recipients of the Keystone Press Awards — photographers Jamie Emplfield and George Powers, sportswriter Matt Burglund, and reporters Bill Zimmerman and Sam Kusik.

BY THE NUMBERS —

■ Updating our primary-election note last week ("approximately 5,500 of IUP's 14,000-plus student enrollment comes from four western Pennsylvania counties"), Indiana County is the largest contributing county to the campus population.

According to IUP spokesperson Michelle Frying, 1,851 of the university's current students have Indiana County addresses. Ranking a close second is Allegheny County, 1,790. The runners-up are Westmoreland (1,104) and Cambria (781).

CONDOLENCES —

The recent obituary columns involved some well-known people, among them:

■ Helen M. Plouse, 103, of Penn Run, one of the area's growing number of centenarians who was a headliner in several longevity categories.

■ Mrs. Plouse was a 50-year Sunday school teacher, a public schoolteacher for 44 years, having started in one-room schoolhouses, and, before her passing, was the oldest member of the Talus Rock Girl Scout Council.

DINING OUT —

Her friends and customers will host a benefit spaghetti dinner tomorrow evening (5-8 p.m.) for cancer patient Heidi McClure, a popular innkeeper at The Rose Inn near Ernest, Jamie Ellis, one of the sparkplugs behind the \$5-a-

person fundraiser, says the event at the Creekside fire hall will also offer a silent auction, other activities and takeouts. Adds Jamie: "Feel free to BYOB." ... Brush Valley firefighters will also host a benefit spaghetti dinner next Thursday (3 to 7 p.m.) at the fire hall, where takeouts will be available.

VILLAGE VIGNETTES —

In response to the question, it is local native Patricia Polotske Burkart, of Sarver, who is the CEO of the newly formed Girl Scouts Western (Pa.) Region, which includes about 40,000 Girl Scouts in 27 counties. Mrs. Burkart, another one of Indiana's hometown success stories, is a daughter of Dr. Joseph Polotske and the late Joan Simmons Polotske. ... Your weekend calendar also includes an Easter egg hunt for children under age 12 at the Pine Township fire hall near Heilwood (1-3 p.m. tomorrow), where, in addition to a visit by the Easter bunny and games, the youngsters will receive treats and prizes.

GOOD NEIGHBORS —

The area's good guys, the people who plow the neighborhoods following the snowstorms, include:

■ Jeff Dunlop and Tony Nastase, Pollock Road in Marion Center; Tom Rowles and Keith and Adam Peterson, Sterling Hills; Mike Reig and Brad Smith, Robin Street; and Rodney Eisenhower and Ronald Port, both of Indiana's First Street.

SHOP TALK AT SIX —

Ground was officially broken this week for construction of a \$300 million ethanol plant at the Clearfield County Technology Park, where as many as 70 new jobs will be created. ... Work is also under way on Indiana developer Dave Moore's new Oakland Avenue Townhomes, a three-story, multi-unit apartment complex at Oakland Avenue and School Street. ... Ouch! Gasoline prices at local pumps this week jumped to a record \$3.29 a gallon. ... Willie, our ex-shoeshine boy, says you might rank it as the most frequent rear-seat question heard on family auto trips: "Do we eat here, or at the next place?"

Good Evening!

LEADERS HONORS



TERI ENCISO/Gazette

FIVE COMMUNITY leaders were recognized Thursday at the annual Leader's Circle Awards event at the Rustic Lodge. The 2008 winners are, from left, Civic Leader Award winner Bill Otto; Rodney and Ellen Ruddock, winners of the IUP President's Medal of Distinction award; Athena Award winner Elizabeth Gregg; and Civic Leader Award winner Kris Mellinger. The Civic Leader Award recognizes individuals who have a lifetime of volunteer service designed to improve the quality of life in Indiana County; have demonstrated creativity and initiative in serving the needs of Indiana County; and have provided significant leadership and a high level of involvement in projects designed to advance and make the county a better place to live and work. The Athena Award is recognition of a man or woman who has achieved excellence in a career or profession, has made outstanding contributions to the county and has created leadership opportunities for women in business.

Report: No al-Qaida, Iraq link found

Continued from Page 1

During the funeral in a village outside Mosul in northern Iraq, grieving Christians swept and wailed as the archbishop's coffin was carried down the streets, led by a church official carrying a wooden cross affixed with Rahho's picture.

Since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, Iraqi Christians have been targeted by Islamic extremists who label them "crusaders" loyal to U.S. troops. Militants have attacked churches, priests and businesses owned by Christians, many of whom have fled the country in a trend mirrored across the Islamic world.

Chaldean church is an Eastern-rite denomination aligned with the Roman Catholic Church that recognizes the authority of the pope. Chaldean Catholics make up a tiny minority of the current Iraqi population but are the largest group among the less than 1 million Christians in Iraq, according to last year's International Religious Freedom Report from the U.S. State Department.

Rahho, 65, was seized on Feb. 29 in Mosul, a city considered by the U.S. military as the last urban stronghold of al-Qaida in Iraq.

It was not immediately clear whether Rahho was killed or if he died of an illness while in captivity.

He was the most senior Catholic cleric in Iraq after Cardinal Emmanuel III Dely — who was elevated to the College of Cardinals by the pope last November.

A Mosul morgue official, speaking on condition of anonymity for security concerns, said Rahho's body had no bullet holes.

The official said police found the body in an early stage of decomposition under a thin layer of dirt just north of the city, suggesting that Rahho had been dead for a few days.

At the time of the kidnapping, church officials said the archbishop had health problems which they did not elaborate on.

Associated Press writer Ryan Lenz contributed to this report from Baghdad.

Amish milk nourishes cheese manufacturer in Smicksburg

Continued from Page 1

"This community was started as a farming community and most Amish don't grain farm. Their farming, being milk cows, needs a viable outlet for the milk where it doesn't cost them an arm and a leg to move it."

The milk is retrieved in 100-gallon metal canisters from the farmers, about 80,000 pounds of milk a week. It is poured into two large milk tanks, which flow into a pasteurizing machine. The machine — which Ed said is one of the most modern units in the state — heats and cools the milk, cleansing it.

After the milk is pasteurized, it goes into long, thin, oval vats, which hold about 1,840 gallons, where cultures, calcium and other necessary ingredients are added. The milk coagulates and is then separated into liquids and solids, or whey and curds. The curds are salted, flavored and pressed into 40-pound blocks and left to age in a cooler for at least a few weeks. After it ages, the blocks are cut into smaller blocks and

sold in the Evans' storefront, P&J Cheese House.

"Cheese making is very interesting because of the difference in flavor. The difference in flavors in a lot of cheese is 1 degree in temperature, and there are other subtle differences," Ed said. "It's amazing you can take 16,000 pounds of liquid in a vat and three to four hours later have 1,600 pounds of cheese."

To reopen the plant, Ed said he faced a major hurdle and an issue that was attributed to the closing of the plant under previous owners: What to do with the excess whey? But with the help of the county, he connected with Brookside Dairy in Homer City, which will dispose of the whey for free in an anaerobic digester, which breaks down the whey while producing fertilizer for fields and generating electricity.

A countywide effort of the Indiana County Office of Planning and Development; the county commissioners; the Small Business Development Center at Indiana University of Pennsylvania; El-

derton State Bank; the department of agriculture; Rep. Sam Smith, R-Punxsutawney; Sen. Don White, R-Indiana; the Penn State Extension Office; and the Indiana County Conservation District, helped get the cheese factory up and running.

The almost \$500,000 effort to get the cheese factory up and running was funded in part by a \$50,000 loan from the county's revolving loan fund and \$200,000 through the state's Small Business First program.

"It was like a giant jigsaw puzzle. They just started connecting things," Evans said. "Here we are two years later we have an operational project."

The Evans gave local representatives and members of the agricultural community a tour of the plant on Thursday while Smicksburg Community Cheese served as the meeting point for Sen. White's quarterly agriculture meeting.

"I've been desperately trying to get some influence and develop business in the northern part of Indiana County,"

White said. "To have Mr. Evans walk in my door and say 'I want to revitalize the cheese factory' is tremendous. It's great for the county."

Commissioner Rodney Ruddock also applauded the countywide efforts to revitalize the factory and said the reactivating of the plant was a significant step for attracting and keeping agriculture and business in the county.

"I just want to applaud the efforts of Senator Don White to move forward and help move business into the northern sector in Indiana County. This is one of the first to really start up again. The university's been very helpful" in developing the business, he said.

Now that the plant is operational, Evans projects the creation of seven to 10 new jobs in three years.

The plant is in production two days a week and will increase depending on the market. Production can be viewed from two large windows, low enough for children.

The next step, Ed said, is to work on

marketing the cheese and find local stores to carry their product. Younger Amish farmers are also showing interest in sending their milk to the factory.

Smicksburg Community Cheese sells a variety of flavors from its storefront, including garlic, mild cheddar, horse-radish, pepper jack and flavors derived from Evans family experiments.

"They say the best cheese makers are women because they can cook," said Bobbi Jo, who added that she adds the necessary "woman's touch" to the cheese, and her latest creation was a cranberry-almond cheese.

And even in its first month of production, Ed estimates a 50 percent increase in business in the first month. But to the Evans, the success is a result of everyone's efforts — from the farmers that produce the milk to the family that makes the cheese.

"It's all done the hard way," Bobbi Jo said. "It's named Smicksburg Community Cheese because that's the reason — it's for the community."