



Rehab funding closed to Lancaster's "working poor"

NewsLanc recently interviewed Rick Kastner, Executive Director of the Lancaster County Drug and Alcohol Commission (LCDAC). Our discussion with Kastner revealed the many challenges facing both Lancaster's drug and alcohol addicted residents and the systems that seek to help them.

On December 8, 2008, the Lancaster County Drug and Alcohol Commission (LCDAC) had to cease accepting new placements into rehab and halfway house (HH) programs. There will be no new admissions until the beginning of the next fiscal year, on July 1.

Detox treatments (often dealing with life-or-death situations) and outpatient treatment (often less expensive) have remained open for new admissions. But rehab and HH are generally considered the "bread and butter" of addiction treatment, and their temporary closing marks a severe reduction in LCDAC's treatment services.

On July 1, when the LCDAC receives its new budget, the rehab and HH admissions will be

reopened. But not for long. This next budget will likely be cut by at least 2%, but probably more. In the words of Kastner, "It'll be a real victory if we only have that 2% cut."

The actual rehab and halfway house facilities are still up and running, because people are also admitted through personal health insurance or public medical assistance: "The welfare card in Lancaster provides over \$6 million in [drug and alcohol] treatment....So our office is not the only referral source in town to keep those beds filled."

Unfortunately, there is one class of people that will not be offered many of those beds in the coming months: The "working poor." This group includes those workers who do not qualify for public medical assistance, yet cannot afford the cost of health care. Those who can barely afford health care can rarely obtain a plan that would cover drug and alcohol treatment. The LCDAC would typically provide rehab or HH services to people in such circumstances, were it not for the current budget limitations.

SD of L to begin dual language immersion program

In the 2009-2010 school year, the School District of Lancaster will begin its first ever dual-language immersion program (DLIP). The 25-child kindergarten class will roughly consist of half English-speaking and half Spanish-speaking students, and will be taught in both languages (70% Spanish; 30% English).

Similar programs have already been implemented throughout the United States and have proven that young children can rapidly gain fluency and confidence in a foreign language within less than 3 years.

Newspapers and High seem to rule out slots at *Convention Center*

An April 19's *Sunday News* editorial entitled, "Slots in the city? Don't bet on it" gave voice to the view held by some observers that the future of the Convention Center may eventually include the introduction of slot machines. Unfortunately, the article, though fairly extensive in its investigation, did not draw statements from the most important voices on the matter. So *NewsLanc* set out to obtain those statements.

NewsLanc first spoke with Harold Miller, President and CEO of Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. When posed with the question of whether LNP would ever support the introduction of slots, Miller would not directly answer, simply

stating, "*There is no basis of fact to anything that you're saying.*" Avoiding a "Yes" or "No", he characterized the question as "absurd."

NewsLanc then brought the same question to a representative of High Industries, who also declined to comment. The High representative referred *NewsLanc* to published statements by Josh Nowak, "*representative of Interstate Hotels, the professional management company hired by the integrated facility's ownership entities.*" In the aforementioned *Sunday News* article, Nowak is quoted as saying, "*There will be no slot machines in this integrated facility.*"

NEW ERA: The April 23rd article was headed "*3 chain stores to anchor Rt. 30 East center, Work on \$40M complex to begin this summer.*" It goes on to report "*Joint developers High Real Estate Group and Faison Enterprises Inc. of Charlotte, N.C., aim to build a 285,000-square-foot shopping center for up to six anchor stores and as many as 20 or more tenants in all.*"

WATCHDOG: Our concern for the continued prosperity of Park city Mall rises with the announcement of each new shopping center and mall. We may reach a tipping point whereby Park City begins to lose patronage and tenants. Within a relatively short time, perhaps three years, the corridors could be largely boarded up and the Mall face the same dire consequences that plagued downtown Lancaster forty years ago when shoppers turned to Park City and the new suburban shopping centers.

If Park City deteriorates, it will be a crushing financial blow to the City and School District of Lancaster since they heavily depend on its tax revenues. The City's problems will spill over onto the entire county.

Ground already zoned commercial is subject to shopping centers. But it is folly for municipalities to rezone large tracts for commercial development.

LETTER: McCaskey's decline in sports

"I am a proud McCaskey graduate from the Class of '90 and it has been sad to watch the decline of the athletic program over the years. I must agree with this article that the burden does lie on the coaching staff, and their ability to motivate and teach the kids on the teams... It is also sad to see coaches put into positions who

have zero experience with the sport they have been given control of. Playing a sport does not make you a coach of just any sport. You have got to know the game, you have got to know your team, and you have to nurture all of the players you have and make it fun - win or lose!"

Visit www.NewsLanc.com daily for news, commentary, letters, and other features.
Suggestions and letters welcome at info@NewsLanc.com.