

Local News

New odor hotline in London Grove expected to lead to better results

By Richard L. Gaw
Staff Writer

For the past several years, the comments from London Grove Township residents have trickled into the equivalent of an abyss, and yet their words and concerns reflect the feelings of thousands of their neighbors.

"Disgusting and is polluting the air," read one entry, posted on the township's odor complaint link from its website. "It stinks," read another. "Overpowering odor," read a third. "The smell from the landfill at 6:30 this morning was overpowering. This is the third time this week we have been awakened by this stink, which is gross. We can't even open our windows."

For the past several years, due mainly to the fact that the township has no mandate for authority to control the air quality of mushroom composting, these comments — which have come in the form of voice messages, calls to the township, e-mail, and through the on-line hotline — could not be addressed in the way that residents wanted them to be.

That is, until now. Wishing to better address citizen's concerns, the township is working with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Chester County Conservation District to provide a more authoritative audience for these complaints. Developed by township intern Natasha Nau, all London Grove complaint hotline comments are now linked directly to a similar on-line form developed by the DEP. According to township manager Steve Brown, all comments are kept on record with the DEP, and if problems persist, the DEP will address these complaints directly with the mushroom composting companies themselves.

"Agricultural uses in Pennsylvania enjoy significant protections under state law from municipal regulations, so called 'nuisance regulations,' that other businesses don't enjoy," said Brown. "We've been told year after year that there's nothing we can do. The idea is to get those with authority to do something about it. They're going to be better able to address it. We don't have the authority to mandate as a municipality."

"We're trying to make the hotline more meaningful," Nau said. "Residents kept saying to us that when they complain, they don't see any results. They say, 'We don't see these odors being reduced. We don't feel that the Township is doing enough to take our complaints seriously.' This link is our opportunity to work with the mushroom farmers to reduce these odors."

For years, there has been dispute, both private and public, as to whether the odor adversely give off adverse health impacts for those in close proximity, which include not only private residences but neighboring schools. In what has often been referred to in the Avondale-Landenbergh-West Grove triangle as "the smell of money," the effects of mushroom composting on the air quality of the area has been a necessary evil of living in the southern region of Chester County. Principally, the target of finger-pointing has been measuring the level of harm — or relative safety of — the release of hydrogen sulfide emissions into the air. In 1999, the Pennsylvania DEP, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, conducted a study in both London Grove and Franklin townships, which included testing the ambient and indoor air quality of nearby mushroom sites. In its findings, the study revealed no conclusive evidence link-



Courtesy photo
Natasha Nau, an intern for London Grove Township, recently improved the efficiency of the township's odor hotline.

ing hydrogen sulfide emissions with physical health impacts. However, the report said that the emissions did have an impact on the residents' quality of life.

"I think they have a hidden agenda here," said Jack Arrell, general manager of Hy-Tech Mushroom Compost, Inc. in West Grove. "In the past, the township used to give notice to the accused, to whomever was closest by, and in our case, they would let us know and we would pursue it. If the people complained, the township would call and tell us there was a complaint at such and such a time and date. We haven't had any input on this new-odor procedure at all."

"If they don't want mushroom people here, they should say that," Arrell added.

Currently, the township averages four to five messages a month, and as the township improves its on-line odor hotline, it continues to meet with DEP and County Conservation authorities. "It's not a sure thing, but it's one step closer in order for it to get results," Nau said. "We want to understand it more, so that we can better explain it to our residents."

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Tommy Lafferty named 2012 Mushroom Festival Honorary Chairman

Tommy Lafferty is a champion of Kennett Square, the mushroom industry, and the Mushroom Festival. For his service and dedication to the community, the industry, and the Festival, the Mushroom Festival's Board of Directors named him as the 27th Annual Mushroom Festival's Honorary Chairman.

During the Mushroom Festival, Tommy is everywhere. Among his favorite duties is serving as the Master of Ceremonies for the Community Parade and all the events in the Culinary Tent. At other times he can be found driving a golf cart through the streets delivering supplies, equipment and/or people to where they are needed. Tommy is around from beginning to end, lending a hand to be sure the Festival is running smoothly and Kennett Square is showcased at its best. As the husband of Mushroom

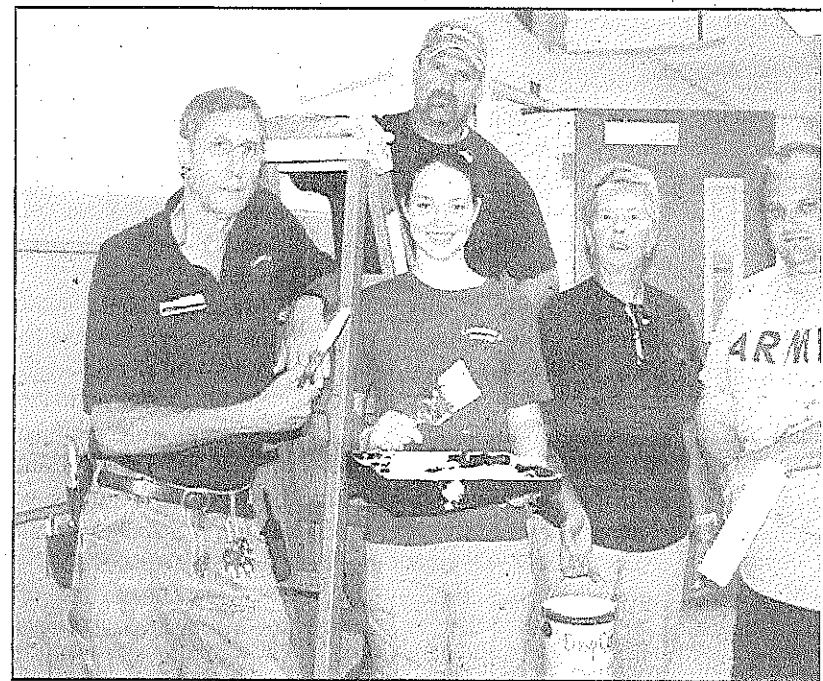


Festival Coordinator Kathi Lafferty, Tommy supports her through all the craziness involved in organizing such a huge endeavor.

Tommy is a mushroom grower and co-owner of P. A. Lafferty and Sons, with his brothers Phil and Steve. The company is part of the Country Fresh cooperative of mushroom growers. He has served on various mushroom industry committees over the years.

He was still resides in Kennett Township, Kennett High School. Tommy and his wife have three children: Keira, Anthony, and Victoria. As the Honorary Chairman of the 27th Annual Mushroom Festival, Tommy will always do his part to make this recognition

A new coat of paint at Jordan Bank thanks to Cameron's

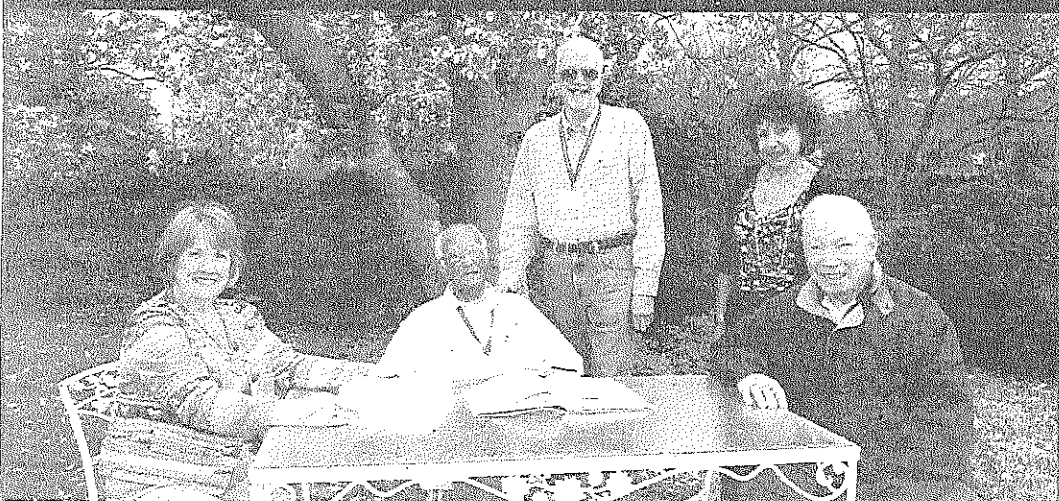


On July 17, employees of Cameron's True Value Hardware in Oxford volunteered to help spruce up schools during the national True Value Hardware project. Cameron's was provided with 10 gallons of paint from True Value, which was used by 10 employee volunteers, along with Principal David Hamburg. Pictured are employees Dan Rich, Maria Lupien and Jeff Hughes, Cameron's owner Angie Cameron, and Mr. Hamburg.

Meet Penn London Elementary School's new principal

Parents are invited to a "Chat and Chew" gathering to meet Dr. Cynthia Holland, of Penn London Elementary School, on either Tuesday, July 31 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. or August 9 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the school library. Light refreshments will be provided.

Looking for more excitement? Register now!



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