

Good Skate

DV grad will be competing in US Figure Skating Association Collegiate Championship in April.

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Winter wins

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and Jamie Hockenberry. See page 18 for more. (Contributed photo)



Delaware Township Supervisor Ileana Hernandez speaks to the participants and guests of "Park Break 08" about township conservation issues and what measures it takes to confront them. (Photo by Nick Troiano)

Future managers hear issues in running a park

By Nick Troiano

DINGMANS HERRY — The next generation of conservation leaders arrived in the Delaware Water Gap earlier this month for a four-day program titled "Park Break! 2008."

Eight participating graduate students came from across the country and around the world; they were among 21 colleagues at three other national parks to learn about conservation issues from national park staff, local officials, and other presenters. The purpose of Park Break is to begin the conversation between graduate students and the scientific community in order to explore how participants with varied perspectives address pertinent park issues, said Program Coordinator Corliss Outley.

"These students gave up an opportunity to spend a week in Cancun because we told them about the wonderful, warm beaches in Pike County," joked Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DWGNRA) Su-

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perintendent John Donahue.

Deputy Superintendent of the DWGNRA, Bob Karotko, said that the program is a great way to connect to graduate students and explain the mission of the national parks and how to protect resources.

Karotko said the two main ideas he hopes the participants take away with them from their experience at the water gap are the complexities of managing conservation and the necessity for a collective approach with community partners to produce results.

Both of these ideas were the main focus during a panel discussion hosted by Grey Towers in Milford, a place with a special link to the beginnings of conservationism itself. Panelists included Director of the Pike County Office of Community Planning, Sally Corrigan, Delaware Township Supervisor Ileana Hernandez, Roger Spotts of the Monroe County Conservation District, and Sandyston Township Committeeman George Harper. Each brought a unique aspect of conservationism — how it affects different municipalities, what difficulties communities and officials face, and how planning takes place.

Corrigan touched upon the ecological assets of the county, such as its drinking water and wildlife diversity, and the importance of preserving it. She explained several ways the planning office goes about that while anticipating growth and development, one of which included utilizing satellite imagery to make predictions.

Hernandez, whose township is currently working on creating a comprehensive conservation plan, said, "We have to be able to preserve what is important to our future." She recognized difficulties in doing that, such as limiting a tax base with increased open space.

Spotts spoke on how ordinance enforcement operates and the mission of the conservation district.

Committeeman Harper, in his message to the students, said too often people do not invest in planning but look back and ask, "How are we going to fix this?"

After a brief break in two different groups, the visiting students brainstormed what questions they



Sandyston Township, N.J. Committeeman George Harper fields questions from the participants as, from left, Roger Spotts of the Monroe County Conservation District, Delaware Township Supervisor Ileana Hernandez and Pike Planner, Sally Corrigan listen. (Photo by Nick Troiano)

wanted to ask the presenters. The students took particular interest into how governing entities work with each other on both the same and different levels of government. The students also inquired about how people new to the community might view conservation and development differently than those who already live in the area, to which most panelists smiled and remarked that this difference accounts for much public controversy when it comes to conservation planning and establishing ordinances.

Following the day's activities, participant Carena van Riper told the Courier that the experience thus far had been very insightful in being able to demonstrate larger issues in the National Park Service. Riper said that the diversity of the presentations and panelists greatly contributed to her learning experience, as well as "being around such a bright group of students."

The program lasted a total of four days, and the students were provided lodging at the Pocono Environmental Education Center. Karotko said he is optimistic funding will be available to continue the annual program into 2009 and beyond. The selective program is sponsored by the US Geological Survey, the National Park Service, the Student Conservation Association the George Wright Society, and Texas A&M University.