

BRIEFS

Passport, ID offices closed Thursday

NEWTON — The Sussex County Clerk's passport and administrative offices will be closed Thursday due to staff passport training. The Records Room will remain open to the public for document searches during regular office hours from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Save the Homestead meeting Wednesday

FRANKFORD — A "Save the Sussex County Homestead" meeting will be held Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the Homestead nursing home. For information, call the Save the Homestead Committee Chair Linda Hunter Conklin at 918-527-6742.

Music-themed photos on display

NEWTON — An artist's reception with Trevor Hodgson, originally scheduled for Sept. 10, has been canceled. Hodgson's photo, Concert on the Green, will be showcased during the Photos with a Beat exhibit at the Sussex County Arts and Heritage Council Gallery. Visitors can see more of Hodgson's music-themed photos and the rest of the show by visiting the gallery between Sept. 3 and Oct. 1. The photo exhibit will be shown concurrently with New Harmonies, a traveling exhibit from the Smithsonian Institution, which will start Sept. 18. The gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. More information can be found by going to the council's website at www.scahc.org and clicking on "Events," or by calling 973-383-0027. The gallery is located at 133 Spring St. in Newton.

New day for fire truck dedication

NEWTON — The formal dedication of Newton's new fire truck, Tower 804, which was canceled by Hurricane Irene, will be Saturday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars parking lot on Mill Street, a block north of the truck's home at Fire Station 1.

The public is invited to see the truck from 3:30 to 9 p.m. The Rev. Brian Sullivan, pastor of St. Joseph's Church, will bless the truck at 3:30 p.m.

The "wetdown," a fire-fighting tradition of christening a new truck with water, will be from 4 to 7 p.m. with other fire departments invited to participate. From 7 to 9 p.m., the public can get an up-close view and firefighters will be available to answer questions about the truck's operations.

Tower 804 was delivered to the town in early June and went into formal service July 1 once enough members had been trained and certified as operators of the truck's numerous controls.

Throughout the ceremony, there will be hot dogs, burgers, salads and beverages available and a DJ will provide music. The department will also have available for purchase mugs and T-shirts commemorating the event and challenge coins commemorating the department's 175th anniversary this year.

The formal celebration of the Newton department's founding is planned for Sept. 24.

The new truck, manufactured by Pierce Manufacturing, cost \$935,000, some of which was covered by insurance.

Fire department plans dinner

SWARTSWOOD — The Swartswood Volunteer Fire Department is hosting its annual chicken barbecue from 4 to 7 p.m. Sept. 3. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Call 973-300-4119 or 973-383-5450 for tickets or information.

Wedding went from bad, to worse, to amazing

Hurricane Irene forces Sussex County couple to rethink plans

By KATIE BRENZEL
kbrenzel@njherald.com

"Ironic" isn't the word one Sussex County couple would use to describe Irene's arrival on their wedding day. Potentially "disastrous" perhaps, but ultimately, nothing short of "divine intervention."

Meeting post-wedding and post-hurricane at The Chatterbox Drive-In in Augusta, friends and family of newlyweds Daniel and Casey (Gardner) Luizzi recounted the wedding on Monday, which despite a last-minute change of location and power outages, managed to persevere through the extreme weather.

"Irene couldn't do anything to us," said Lou Casper, long-time friend of the bride's family. "We had it under control."

With the hurricane looming, the wedding's well-laid plans began to fall apart Saturday night. Fearing the worst, the band booked to perform at the reception canceled the night before the wedding. The 19-piece band was from Essex County and feared traveling through the storm, said John Gardner, father of the bride. To replace the big-band style performance, Casper prepared a playlist of 1,400 songs to play on an iPod on Sunday. Instead of a live a capella rendition of their wedding song, "When I Fall in Love," the couple would dance to an MP3 recording on speakers. But this was just the beginning of the wedding's obstacles.

"Bad led to worse, and then it all became amazing," Casey Luizzi said.

Between 10:30 a.m. and noon on the day of the wedding, the location of the ceremony and reception was changed.

"In the morning (you) woke up with a big question mark in your head, then by noon, it was all worked out," said Peg Gardner, mother of the bride.

The reception was to be held at the Conservatory at the Sussex County Fairgrounds in Augusta.

"We wanted something different, but we didn't want a 'wedding factory place,'" explained Casey Luizzi. Hurricane Irene, however, made the location an impossibility, as the storm caused massive mudslides and flooding at the fairgrounds.

On his way to Mass at St.



Submitted Photos

A view from the Conservatory at the Sussex County Fairgrounds on Sunday shows flooding conditions. Daniel and Casey Luizzi were supposed to have their wedding reception at the Conservatory on Sunday, when Hurricane Irene blew through the area.



For a video on this story, visit njherald.com.

Thomas the Apostle Church in Sandyston on the morning of the wedding, Casper received a call from Mark Musilli, fairgrounds manager, informing of the condition of the fairgrounds. Casper then turned to the Rev. Wayne Varga, of St. Thomas, who said the couple could hold the reception and the ceremony at church.

The wedding was originally to take place at Christ Union Chapel at Culver Lake. The couple chose the church, which is open exclusively in the summer, for its intimate atmosphere and its "beauty" the bride said, as well as the fact that she'd gone to the church as a child. However, due to the church's size, the processional would have had to stand outside prior to entering the church, meaning the bride and wedding party were in danger of getting drenched.

When the couple learned that St. Thomas was willing to take on both the ceremony and the reception, they decided that it would be best to hold the events in the same location. In a flurry of text messages and calls, the changes for the wedding fell in place.

Getting to the wedding, however, also proved a struggle. The bride and bridesmaids initially prepared to get ready at the house of the bride's mother, who lives in Branchville. However, with the borough's evacuation,

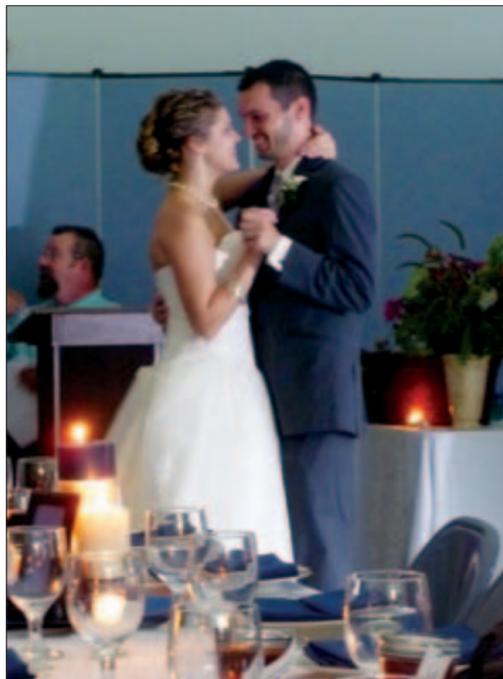
floodwaters not only separated the mother of the bride from her daughter's wedding, but also the bride from her dress. The bridesmaids' dresses and the father of the bride's tuxedo also were stranded in Branchville. After a bit of panicking, the bride recounted, all were reunited at the bride's apartment.

Ultimately, the wedding party, guests, the caterers — Krave Cafe and Caterers of Newton, the ceremony musicians and the pastor, Bill Stauffer, all arrived at the church on time. All elements seemed to be in place, until the power went out right before the processional. With the electronic keyboard rendered useless in the dark, the bride was guided down the aisle by natural light pouring through the church windows and the sound of a lone cello.

With the lights out in the reception hall, plan B for musical entertainment reverted to plan C. The bride played the prepared iPod from her car by running an extension cord to the reception area. Her car idled for four hours. Despite the apparent setbacks, the couple agreed that they were thankful that they were able to get married.

"It was just so wonderful for us," the bride said. "It's a church I never even set foot in."

Of the 106 confirmed guests,



The Luizzis dance at their wedding, which was moved to St. Thomas the Apostle Church due to the hurricane.

only 15 were unable to make it. The groom's brother and best man, Thomas Luizzi, a captain in the U.S. Army, was forced to leave Saturday due to mass airport shutdowns. The groom's father, Joseph, took his son's place. The bride's brother, Dan Gardner, also encountered difficulties in making it to the wedding. He left from Hawaii on Saturday, but the closest flight he could get to New Jersey was to Cleveland, Ohio. Luckily two of his friends agreed to drive to Cleveland to bring him to the wedding.

After the initial issues, the couple said things seemed to fall into place. The bride and groom designed the centerpieces for the tables at the receptions, consisting of blue and white candles. The bride said that as the night progressed and natural light no longer lit the room, the reception became a candle-lit affair.

"It started to get really romantic," she said.

Not only did the choice of candles seem like an inadvertent act of foresight, but the tiles of the St. Joseph hall are blue and white — the chosen colors of the wedding — a

coordination that the wedding party insists isn't coincidental. Many at the table said that while many people aided in assuring the success of the wedding, a higher power had a hand in bringing the event together.

"It was almost like that's what was meant to be," Casper said.

"It's the feeling that this was God-ordained ... It really was a day that no one will forget," Peg Gardner said.

"I was very sad because everything seemed to be going wrong ... but God intervened here," said Tery Luizzi, mother of the groom. "It turned out for the better."

Sitting with family and friends, the couple seemed both excited and relieved the day after their wedding. Commenting on a text message Pastor Stauffer sent her mother prior to the wedding stating: "At least they have the gift of starting with adversity," the bride said the resilience of the wedding is certainly "something to build off."

"It was a very good test of character," she said. "I'm glad it happened to a couple like us."

Communities find ways to survive without power

By JEFF SISTRUNK
jsistrunk@njherald.com

SUSSEX BOROUGH — The lights were still out Monday for Sussex Borough resident Shannon Roth and tens of thousands of others across the county.

As of late afternoon, 22,308 Jersey Central Power and Light customers and 3,000 Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative customers remained without power as repair efforts continued. Projections for power restoration were largely indeterminate as crews for the two providers scrambled to respond to the effects of Hurricane Irene, and residents and business owners reported being told by service representatives that it would take anywhere from two to eight days for their power to be restored.

Sussex Borough was one of the hardest-hit municipalities in the county as far as power outages were concerned, with virtually all of its homes and commercial buildings losing power.

Roth, who lives with her family on a home along Route 565 in the borough and is a Sussex Rural Electric customer, said she's been without power since 6 a.m. Sunday. When she tried to get to work at Harvest Home Foods in Ogdensburg via Route 23 Monday, she was met with barricades that had been erected in the wake of Hurricane Irene.

"It's awful," Roth said. "I haven't been able to shower for a day, and our road is eroding."

Roth said she heard power to her home would not be restored for at least two days. Since the power cut out, she said she's been filling up the time "playing a lot of games" with family members. Fortunately, Roth has a generator to power her refrigerator, thus ensuring



Photo by Dawn Benko/For the Herald

Route 560, which leads to Dingman's Bridge, was closed Monday due to downed power lines. Power is still out for thousands in Sussex County.

her family's food supplies would be spared.

While most eateries in Sussex Borough were closed Monday, several borough convenience stores remained open despite having no electricity and did solid business as locals sought to lay in provisions.

Mike Patel, owner of Catch 23 Deli, said his store had sold out of both bread and ice by Monday morning. Meanwhile, Jaiprakash Sheth, who is a partner in a convenience store located on the corner of County Road 639 and Mill Street in the borough, reported people coming in throughout the morning for everything from milk to canned food to cigarettes. Sheth said he planned to remain open until sundown Monday.

Brian Oliveira, who bought Baker's Pharmacy in November, kept the pharmacy open in case customers needed to pick up medica-

tions on account of emergencies. While Oliveira has a generator on hand at the store, he said it is only powerful enough to provide electricity to central equipment, such as the refrigerator, where products like insulin are maintained.

"It's been pretty rough," he said. "Unfortunately, for a small business, one day like this can really affect us."

In areas where power remained, there was an increase in customers. A Home Depot spokesman, Stephen Holmes, said that Sussex County, like the rest of the state, saw an increase of "post-strike products."

These products are used for cleaning up after the storm, and normally include chainsaws, trash bags, sump pumps, wet-dry vacuums and dehumidifiers. For Sussex County residents without power, the hot item has been generators, which have become increasingly

difficult to find.

The Lowe's on Hampton House Road in Newton received a shipment of generators on Monday, but sold out within 20 minutes, according to Manager Dan Lorden.

"We are working to secure another truckload of generators," he said. "We are unsure if we will get them, but we are trying to."

The Lowe's lost power over the weekend, but used a backup generator to stay open. The store have also sold out of flashlights, but have seen people get resourceful by purchasing Halloween flashlights or outdoor solar lights that can be turned into flashlights.

Gas stations also saw increases in customers as long lines formed at the stations that still had electricity.

At the Ross' Corner Exxon people were coming with containers to get propane

After the storm survival tips

- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, use generators, pressure washers, grills and similar items outdoors only.
- Check with local authorities to be sure your water is safe. If your well has flooded, boil the water or use bottled water until further notice.
- If your septic tank has flooded, try to use water sparingly until underground water has receded. This may take as much as a week. If problems persist, repairs may be necessary.
- Avoid power lines and use electric tools and appliances safely to prevent electrical shock.
- A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours. Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.
- For products in the refrigerator — pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice, if available.
- Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of your food right before you cook or eat it. Throw away any food that has a temperature of more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

for generators.

"There are more people and people are coming to get gas," Manager Sam Asan said. "A lot more gas is being sold. A lot more people are buying ice and we ran out, but more is coming soon."