

Katrina and Rita brought devastation



When Hurricane Katrina roared ashore in the Gulf Coast region Aug. 29 as what an Associated Press story termed a "monstrous, 145-mph storm," it brought a storm surge estimated to be more than 30 feet high that destroyed most everything that was in its path. One of the hard-hit areas was Bay St. Louis, Miss., where, according to Tom Garber of Montoursville, state director for Tech Serve International, bridges were knocked off their foundations, roads were crumbled — as evidenced in the photo at left — and up to 60 percent of the homes were destroyed.

Tech Serve provides relief



The effects of Katrina sent Garber and five others from the Williamsport area into action from Sept. 17 until they returned home Monday. In Bay St. Louis, Miss., and at other sites in Louisiana and, after Hurricane Rita struck Texas, the crew worked with evangelical churches, installing portable generators to provide electricity needed to assist in the relief effort. Some of the electricity is used to run air conditioners that help cool living quarters for volunteers, as daytime temperatures go well into the 90s. It also is used to operate make-shift kitchens and aid in food distribution centers. At the site in Bay St. Louis operated by the Southern Baptist Convention relief team, 8,000 meals are prepared each day for volunteers and people in the community. At left, Garber makes connections on one of the generators.



Photos provided by Tech Serve



Within a week after Tech Serve's arrival and work began in Mississippi and Louisiana, Hurricane Rita struck Texas and that sent the team into further action as it went to Little Rock, Ark. to purchase an additional dozen propane generators for use in Kirbyville and Bridge City, Texas. Seventeen additional smaller generators, seen still boxed in the background in the photo at right, were donated to Tech Serve's cause by a businessman in Pottsville. According to Garber, the clean-up effort alone in the region will take another year or two. He said Tech Serve will continue to assist in the recovery effort for at least another six months. "As funds become available, we want to continue to help churches in need," he said. Once electricity is restored to the region, the Tech Serve generators will be returned to Montoursville for refurbishing and then put into use in Tech Serve's ongoing Third World missions projects. More information is available on the Internet at www.techserve.org.

Local USDA Rural Development office best in Pennsylvania

The Lycoming office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development has been recognized as Pennsylvania Rural Development office of the year, a news release from the department said.
The award is given to the office that delivers a balanced program and is committed to the future of rural communities, the advisory said.
The USDA Rural Development serves as a federal agency for rural development needs by offering financial and technical assistance to individuals, businesses and communities.
The office serves Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Sullivan and Tioga counties.

Lycoming County Commissioners

County law library may move from courthouse basement

By DENA PAULING
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The county law library may soon leave the courthouse basement and move into the James V. Brown library — a change that appears to be in everyone's favor.
In January, the Brown library hired a

consultant to see if the switch would be feasible and particularly focus on whether there would be enough space, said Janice Trapp, executive director of the Brown library.
The recently completed study supported the idea.
"She gave us a good report," Trapp said,

referring to the consultant. "Not surprisingly, as it is in every field, a lot of information is online and in print. And the consultant determined we could accommodate a really good law library using the technology that we have."
The Lycoming County commissioners (See LAW, Page B-4)

Thousands of 'change of value notices' to go out this month

By DENA PAULING
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County chief assessor James W. Carpenter took a 4-inch thick stack of bright yellow papers and set them on a table in front of the Lycoming County commissioners Tuesday.

The 7,463-paper stack represented the properties of landowners in the county that will receive a "change of value notice" this month. Most will see a tax increase after the state Legislature passed Act 235, which changes Clean and Green regulations.
The commissioners will consider approving the value notices during their reg-

ular Thursday meeting.
Intended to encourage them to preserve agricultural and forest lands, property owners enrolled in Clean and Green receive a tax break in exchange for limited development on their land. Rather than being assessed at fair market value, the land (See THOUSANDS, Page B-4)

Keystone Central raises concern about insurer's donation

By JIM RUNKLE
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RENOVO — A recent decision by Blue Cross-Blue Shield to donate a portion of its corporate reserves to Hurricane Katrina and Rita Relief has raised some eyebrows with Keystone Central School District, one of the health insurance company's clients.
Specifically, the school board wonders about the appropriateness of the company's donation — especially when Blue Cross hiked its insurance rate to the district by 37 percent last year.
"I want us to investigate the possibility of a lawsuit," board member Jeff Snyder said at (See KEYSTONE, Page B-3)