

# Croc refuge revived

## After devastating loss, preservation work starts anew

By Eric Freehling, Focus Editor

Nearly two years after their crocodile sanctuary in Belize was destroyed by a fire-setting mob, a Butler native and her husband are still working to rebuild.

Cherie Chenot-Rose said she and her husband, Vince, are rebuilding the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary on a shrimp farm in Ladyville, outside Belize City. The new facility replaces the one that was near the fishing village of Punta Gorda.

Chenot-Rose said hundreds of villagers burnt that facility to the ground on Sept. 5, 2010.

"There were two children missing," Chenot-Rose said. "A psychic told them we had fed them to the crocodiles."

The Roses weren't home when the violence happened, but their house, all their possessions and two guest bungalows were destroyed.

But the villagers didn't stop at property damage.

"They killed 15 crocodiles," Chenot-Rose said. "The larger ones were shot and died a slow death. The little guys were chopped with machetes."

Protecting the American crocodile is what the Roses have been doing for the last seven and a half years.

"The American crocodile is found only in the Americas," said Chenot-Rose. "The 10,000 to 20,000 estimated worldwide make them as rare as polar bears, only they aren't all cute and cuddly."

Chenot-Rose fears the American crocodile population is much smaller than reported.

"Belize is considered the last stronghold of this species, which is increasingly threatened by poachers, development and pollution," she said.

She said poachers capture crocodiles and chop off their tails to sell on the black market. Mistakenly believing crocodile tails will grow back, they release the maimed reptiles. Now crippled, the animals find it hard to hunt natural prey, Chenot-Rose said, and start eating pets.

"Tourists, who should know better," said Chenot-Rose, "come here to Belize to feed the crocs." As a result, she said, the animals lose their fear of humans and become dangerous.

A crocodile can reach lengths of 18 feet in the wild and 14 feet in captivity.

In their new sanctuary on the 266-acre shrimp farm, four hours north of Punta Gorda, the Roses are already protecting 22 freshwater crocodiles, four saltwater crocodiles and one rescued croc that is being nursed back to health in a holding pen.

Chenot-Rose said the shrimp farm owner is allowing them to use the property, "and we'll deal with his problematic crocs as well. It's a symbiotic relationship."

Chenot-Rose said the shrimp farm property with its waterways, canals and marshes makes an ideal habitat for a crocodile sanctuary. She said with a little work and some barriers, shrimp and crab can enter the crocodiles' areas to provide food sources, and yet the crocodiles are unable to get out.

"It's not a zoo, it's an animal sanctuary where they are kept as humanely as possible," she said. "These are large habitats that can only be viewed from one side. It's set up for the animals, not the viewers."

The new sanctuary is open to visitors by reservation only at the present time.

The Roses concern is for the crocodiles, not the tourists. "We try to make it as stress-free as possible" for the animals, said Chenot-Rose.

In addition to re-establishing their sanctuary, the Roses are trying to raise \$25,000 to complete an educational wildlife refuge on Ambergris Caye, an island off the Central American nation's northeast coast.

"That will enable us to hold crocs here for rehab and re-release or later transport to the main facility in Ladyville," she said, "and also rescue all wildlife in need on the island and get the animals to the appropriate



Butler native Cherie Chenot-Rose readies a crocodile for transfer to a holding facility at the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary in Belize.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Vince Rose of the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary and volunteers on April 24 work to haul a crocodile out of a sewage pump station on Ambergris Caye, where it had been trapped for days. The 12-foot reptile was ill from its confinement in the pump station. "We're feeding it right now, and it's recovering from its muscle atrophy," said ACES' Cherie Chenot-Rose.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Crocodile



Alligator

## CROCS, GATORS AND THEIR DIFFERENCES

There are differences between alligators and crocodiles, said Cherie Chenot-Rose, co-founder of the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary in Belize which is trying to protect both the saltwater and

freshwater species of crocodiles native to the Central American country.

■ Alligators have an overbite. When alligators close their mouths, the bottom teeth fit into the upper jaws. When crocodiles close their

jaws, their teeth intermingle. Also, crocodile's teeth are much more pointed.

■ Alligators have pits on their snouts, called dermal pressure sensors or false nostrils, that allow them to detect vibrations and changes

in water pressure, an advantage for an animal that hunts in murky water. Crocodiles have these dermal pressure sensors not only on their snouts but also along their bellies. They look like black spots.

## POTPOURRI

### Astronomy club to start at Mars Public Library

MARS — Mars Public Library will have an Astronomy Club kick off meeting from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. May 30 at 107 Grand Ave., Mars.

Members will be able to borrow the library's telescope for one-week periods after attending the orientation session.

For more information, call 724-625-9048 or visit [www.marslibrary.org](http://www.marslibrary.org).

### Lecture recounts Freeport history at noon Tuesday

FREEPORT — There will be a luncheon and multimedia dramatic reading and lecture on Massey Harbison at noon Tuesday at the River Forest Country Club clubhouse.

Janet Pazzynski, a Pittsburgh performer, will do a first-person reading of Massey's trying trek through the wilderness as a Native American captive in 1792.

Drenda Gostkowski, a local historian from Winfield Township, will lecture.

A walking tour to the site of Harbison's abduction on the golf greens and the site of the settler's fort at Reed's Station will follow the luncheon and lecture.

For reservations and directions, call Laura at 724-295-2298.

### Evans City museum expands operation hours

EVANS CITY — The Evans City Historical Society museum, located in the rear of the Evans City Library, is now open from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday.

This time is in addition to Tuesday morning hours of 9 a.m. until noon. The museum is supporting the effort to "Save the Chapel" at the Evans City Cemetery through the sale of small wooden replicas of the chapel.

For more information, visit [www.evanscityhistory.com](http://www.evanscityhistory.com).

### Truck-n-tractor cruise planned for June 2

WORTHINGTON — Sugar Creek Rest, 120 Lakeside Drive, will host a truck-n-tractor cruise from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. June 2. A community yard sale will also take place.

There will be trucks and tractors of all makes and models, food, crafts, music, a raffle and face painting for children.

### Zelienople library offering first aid, CPR classes

ZELIENOPE — First aid & CPR instruction will be offered from 7 to 10 p.m. June 4 at the Zelienople Public Library.

The class will include both video and hands-on training.

Lynn Mooney, American Heart Association approved instructor, will be the trainer.

Call the library to register. Other library events will include an ice cream social and magic show June 11, history club June 14 and a program on night gardening June 19.

For more information on these programs, call the library at 724-452-9330 or e-mail [zelienople@bcffls.org](mailto:zelienople@bcffls.org)

### Casting for Recovery's retreat slated for August

The deadline to apply for Casting for Recovery's weekend retreat Aug. 24 to 26 is June 15 for women of Western Pennsylvania who have or have had breast cancer.

The retreat will be held at The River Village in central Pennsylvania.

The Casting for Recovery program uses fly-fishing to promote physical and emotional healing.

Of those who apply, 14 breast cancer survivors will be chosen to participate in the retreat.

Those interested should submit their name by calling 888-553-3500 or visiting [www.castingforrecovery.org](http://www.castingforrecovery.org).

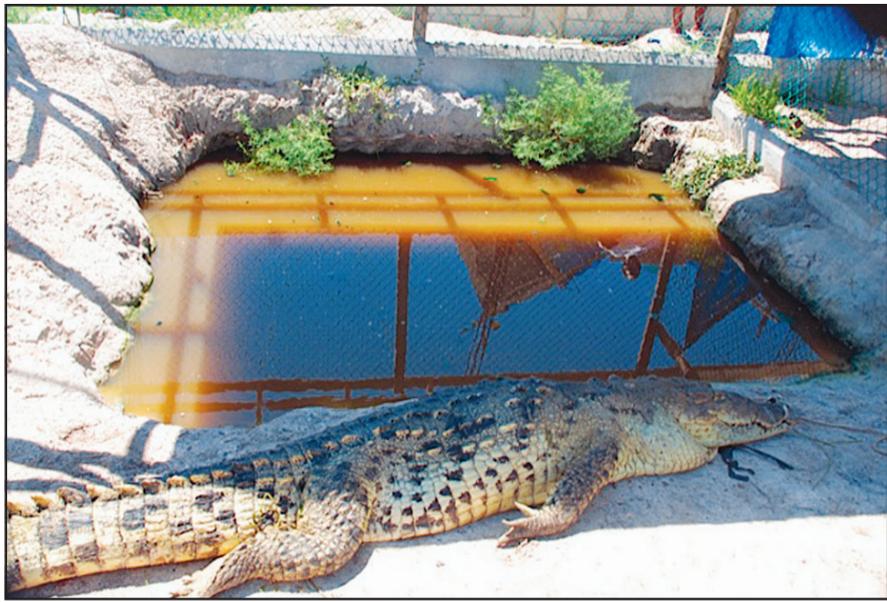
### Mars Home for Youth schedules fundraiser dinner

MARS — The Mars Home for Youth will hold a "Swing into Summer" fundraiser dinner at 7 p.m. June 15 at the Wildwood Golf Club in Allison Park.

The event will feature dinner, silent and live auctions, entertainment and dancing and a major announcement about the organization.

Keynote speakers will be Martin Harris, the home's executive director, and the 2010 winner of the John Heinz Dissertation Award, Jessie Ramey, whose work on adoption features the home.

For more information, visit [www.marshomeforyouth.org](http://www.marshomeforyouth.org) or call 724-625-3141.



Above, the 12-foot crocodile that was rescued April 24 from a sewage pump station in Belize was ill from its confinement but is being nursed back to health. At right, Cherie Chenot-Rose readies the crocodile for

transfer to an American Crocodile Education Sanctuary holding facility after the 45-minute trip.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



## Croc

From Page E1

ate facility to care for them on the mainland."

Although Chenot-Rose said they won't return to the site of their former sanctuary, they're still hoping to recover some of their losses.

The Roses are suing the government of Belize under the Riot Compensation Act, seeking \$500,000 in damages.

"It is expected that this trial will be concluded on May 25, 2012," said the Roses' attorney, Agnes Segura-Gillett of Belize City. "I cannot say when the judge will deliver his judgment; as a practice, they do so

within three months of the last hearing date."

"The Roses are suing the government of Belize because our Riots Act, Chapter 338 of the Law of Belize, makes provisions for persons who suffer loss or damage as a result of a riot to claim compensation from the government of Belize for that loss," said Segura-Gillett.

A spokeswoman for the Attorney General's Ministry of the government of Belize said the matter was before the court, and the ministry wouldn't comment until after a decision has been made by the court.

It's been a winding road that's taken the Butler native from her 1989 graduation from Slippery Rock University with a double major in biology and microbiology to a crocodile sanctuary in Belize.

"It was a long route, but I had worked with alligators with the Barrier Island Education Center in South Carolina, and that's where I first got into reptiles," she said.

"Then I worked for the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the National Marine Fisheries Service. It all leads up to actually being a research biologist. I got my data collection skills

working for those two departments."

She and Vince were married in Colorado, but wished to return to the sea.

"We found Belize and the crocodiles found us. I knew I would do some type of research, and when we found some small crocs plus everyone just wanted to kill crocs out of fear or poaching them, we saw the need," Chenot-Rose said.

ACES is the only permitted crocodile rescue team in the country and the Roses' facility was verified by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

## STUDENT DIRECTORY

### Merit Program invites students

JACKSON TWP — Rosemary Emmerling, Joseph Geyer, Colten Gill, Michael Glatz, Dhruv Kohli, Katherine Miller and Jennifer Rowekamp of Seneca Valley Senior High School have been invited to participate in the 2013 National Merit Program.

The students have all been chosen to move into the program based on the results of their 2011 Preliminary SAT Exams.

These students will learn in the fall if they have reached commended or semifinalist status, and have the opportunity to receive thousands of dollars in scholarships through National Merit.

### Congressional art winners announced

JACKSON TWP — Four Seneca Valley students were recognized as top performers in Congressman Jason Altmire's 2012 Congressional Art Competition.

Taylor Lantz was named the winner, while Bria Davis, Tyler Dorsch and Deanna Magiske were named finalists.

Students from the Pa. Fourth Congressional District were invited to submit original works of art to be judged for the exhibition.

A total of 53 pieces were evaluated on behalf of Congressman Altmire by a panel of local art experts.

Taylor's winning art will now be displayed in the Cannon Tunnel of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., for the next year.

Adam Kealan of Butler was presented an Award of Distinction at the Communicator Awards, an international awards program recognizing big ideas in marketing and communications.

Kealan was recognized in the Film/Video-Student category for a promotional video on the uses of the High Point University, HPU, Passport Card.

The 5½ minute short film takes a comedic approach to explaining the functions of the HPU student ID cards — including access to one's meal plan, dorm room, on- and off-campus spending and campus events.

Kealan is a recent graduate of High Point University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in electronic media.

Eddie Stockert was awarded the Duquesne University Bayer School of Natural and Environmental Science Award at the Pittsburgh Regional Science



### SCHOLARSHIP DONATION

— Accepting scholarship funds Wednesday at St. Luke Lutheran School in Cabot are, from left, Annabelle Turner, Abigail Whalen, Skylar Rhodes, Kelli Kovalick and Blair Bowen. Behind the children are, from left, Lorie Jackson, XTO Energy; state Sen. Don White, R-41st; state Rep. Scott Hutchinson, R-64th; state Rep. Brian Ellis, R-11th; and Terri Fischer, Waste Management. The Bridge Educational Foundation partnered with XTO Energy and Waste Management to give \$105,000 to private schools in Butler and Venango counties for scholarships to their students. The funds include \$70,000 from XTO Energy and \$35,000 from Waste Management.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



**ROBOT REBOUND** — The Knoch Robotics team demonstrated their robot May 9 at the South Butler School Board meeting. The team worked for about six weeks to build the robot to compete in March in the Rebound Rumble, part of the Pittsburgh FIRST robotics competition at the University of Pittsburgh. District staff partnered with Ellen Fogel of Penn State Extension to get \$4,000 from JCPenney, Butler 4-H, FIRST Robotics and the H.J. Heinz Co. Foundation for the Knoch students. Teachers Michael Losk, Timothy Markwell and Zach Smith mentored the team.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

and Engineering Fair March 30 at Heinz Field.

His project was "A Concert Stand on Stream Health." Eddie is a student in the South Butler School District.

Valerie Rodgers of Fenelon will study in Beijing, China, for a four-week summer study program before beginning an internship with the Bank of New York Mellon.

Rodgers is the daughter of George and Kathleen Rodgers.

Erin McCue of Karns City has been accepted to Edinboro University for art education. Erin is a senior at Karns City

High School and participates in soccer, basketball, athletic training, National Honors Society, ACE, Ecology club, Stand Tall, Spanish club, STUCO, Math team and Art club.

She is the daughter of Racy and Rick Belles and Daniel McCue.

Cody Wright of Harmony performed on alto sax with the Lock Haven University jazz ensemble and symphonic band.

Patrick Gillen of Emlenton and Katherine Kosiorek of Slippery Rock, performed April 29 at Lock Haven University.

Alexandra Sutton of Petrolia has been selected for membership in Indiana (Pa.) University's chapter of Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society.

Sutton, daughter of Dennis and Geraldine Sutton, is a 2009 graduate of Karns City High School. A nursing major at IUP, she has been a dean's list recipient each semester of her college career.

Steven Hochberg of Cranberry Township was part of Indiana (Pa.) University's Kappa Sigma fraternity second annual chili cookoff, raising \$700 to benefit the Fisher House program.

Hochberg, the son of Laurie and Paul Hochberg, is an MIS major at IUP.

He is a 2009 graduate of Seneca Valley Senior High School.

This program offers housing to families with military members hospitalized at major military or Veterans Affairs facilities.

Ashley Thiebaud received the Janet E. Hopkins Scholarship, the Judon C. McConnell Scholarship, the Virginia Reehl Patton Memorial Scholarship and the Louise Barr Robertson Scholarship, totaling \$5,316 at the Westminster College Spring Honors Convocation on April 25.

Thiebaud is a junior early childhood education and special education major with a minor in Spanish.

She is a member of Habitat for Humanity, Pi Sigma Pi, Kappa Delta Pi, Mortar Board and Omicron Delta Kappa.

Thiebaud is a graduate of Butler High School and the daughter of John and Sandy Thiebaud of Renfrew and Susan Thiebaud of Pittsburgh.

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## FOCUS



**RESCUE EFFORT** — Butler native Cherie Chenot-Rose and her husband, Vince, are rebuilding their crocodile sanctuary in Belize nearly two years after it was destroyed by a fire-setting mob. Protecting the American crocodile is what they have been doing for the past seven and a half years.

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## SPORTS



**ONE-HITTER** — Tigers pitcher Justin Verlander tips his cap to the crowd Friday after beating the Pirates, 6-0, in an interleague game in Detroit. Josh Harrison broke up Verlander's no-hit bid with a one-out single in the ninth inning.

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## DEATHS

Theresa M. "Sue" James, Buffalo Township

Dr. Albert "Al" Manerino, Mars

William David Peterson, Cabot, formerly of Forest Hills

Vernon E. "Vern" Reddick Sr., Harrisville

Joyce M. Wetick, Saxonburg

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## WEATHER



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**VOL. 143, NO. 69**



# Judge accused of corruption

## Orie Melvin denies claims

By Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — State Supreme Court Justice Joan Orie Melvin was charged Friday with illegally using her taxpayer-funded staff in her campaigns for a seat on the state's highest court in a scheme that ensnared her sister, state Sen. Jane Orie, who is awaiting sentencing on similar charges.

Orie Melvin said outside court that she will defend herself against the nine criminal charges, which a grand jury report called a "tale of corruption" that she "actively condoned and even promoted."

"I am a woman of faith," Orie Melvin said. "My faith will see me through this. And I will not resign because of these politically motivated charges."

The high court on Friday relieved her of judicial and administrative duties, but she remains a Supreme Court justice, on the payroll with a \$195,000 salary and full benefits. The court also ordered Orie Melvin's Pittsburgh office sealed to secure records, files and equipment that are property of the court.



Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Joan Orie Melvin, center, leaves Pittsburgh Municipal Court on Friday after a hearing on charges she illegally used her state-funded staff to perform campaign work. Orie Melvin said she is not guilty of campaign corruption charges connected to her bids for a seat on the high court.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Also Friday, the state Judicial Conduct Board filed disciplinary charges against Orie Melvin. It asked that she be suspended with pay pending a trial before the Court of Judicial Discipline on the allegations that her conduct violated the state constitution and the Code of Judicial Conduct.

The charges come two months after state Sen. Jane Orie, R-40th, was convicted of

on 14 counts of theft of services, conflict of interest and forgery charges. Her district includes southern Butler County.

The grand jury report said Orie Melvin and her staff used personal e-mail accounts to shield the actual e-mail addresses that generated the messages, hiding the fact that political activities were being handled by the staffers while

See **Judge**, Page A5

## Jane Orie to resign Monday

By Jared Stonesifer  
 Eagle Staff Writer

State Sen. Jane Orie is expected to resign her seat Monday after being convicted on 14 charges of political corruption in March.



Jane Orie

In a court filing submitted last month, Orie attorney William Costopoulos said his client would resign her seat on or before May 21, the original date of her sentencing.

That sentencing in front of Allegheny County Judge Jeffrey Manning has been delayed until June 4 to give both prosecutors and the defense time to respond to claims that Orie owes more than \$1.37 million.

See **Orie**, Page A5

## CLOSED TO TRAFFIC

# Bridge work causes long detour

By Kelly B. Garrett  
 Eagle Staff Writer

PARKER, Armstrong County — The closing of the bridge that carries Route 368 across the Allegheny River has people making many detours.

Luckily, drivers say, the bridge is only closed temporarily.

The state Department of Transportation is spending \$4.2 million to repair the bridge's deck and to repaint the bridge.

But merchants who depend on summer river visitors for a large chunk of their livelihoods aren't looking forward to missing those who don't want to take the long way around.

Jay Whyte, who owns Whyte Market at the end of the Parker side of the bridge, said he noticed a drop in business the first day the bridge closed to traffic, March 1.

"I heard some of the restaurants and bars have an 80 percent decline in business and we're just getting to the summer business," he said. "We'll have to hope that some people are willing to come around like always."

"Everyone is having problems with the 22-mile detour — the scrap yard across the river, Central Electric Cooperative, the schools, everyone," Whyte said.

Brenda Brinker, A-C Valley School District superintendent, said the district worked with the school bus company and parents to come up with a plan to pick up children on both sides of the



Parker Mayor Bill McCall talks about the Parker Bridge being closed for renovations. The state Department of Transportation is spending \$4.2 million for repainting and to repair the bridge's deck.

JUSTIN GUIDO/BUTLER EAGLE

river, to get them to school and back again.

"We came up with a plan that has most kids getting up only 20 minutes earlier than before," she said. "Initially, our plan would have had them up 40 minutes earlier."

"We had a lot of advanced notice from the state, and spread the word with our automatic

See **Bridge**, Page A5

## PARKER BRIDGE FACTS

Here are some statistics on the Parker Bridge, which is being painted and renovated by the state Department of Transportation:

- ✓ **BUILT** — 1934 by the McClintic-Marshall Co. of Pittsburgh
- ✓ **STYLE** — It is a truss-style bridge that carries Route 368 and a Conrail right-of-way across the Al-

legheny River from Parker in Armstrong County to Clarion County. The bridge also has a pedestrian walkway that connects a rails-to-trails hiking trail.

- ✓ **HOW BIG** — The bridge is 1,140 feet long with a bridge deck 24.9 feet wide.

SOURCE: According to [www.historicbridges.org](http://www.historicbridges.org)

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