

Lenses trained on block party

Businesses link cameras to watch revelers

By **PETER KENDRON**
Press Enterprise Writer

BLOOMSBURG — While large groups of revelers party outside today, a few people will be inside, watching them.

Businesses have linked roughly 40 surveillance cameras on Main Street, East Street, Lightstreet Road and Fetterman Avenue to form a citizens' watch network, says Eric Bower of Bower Media.

And any business owner involved in the network can log on to his computer and watch live video from all of the cameras, said Bower, who formed the network.

For Block Party today, he expected a few people would be watching closely.

"If anyone sees anything happening, they can pick up the phone, call the communications center, and let police know," he said.

Trouble spotted

Even if mischief isn't witnessed live, most of the cameras are also recording, storing 30 days or more of footage.

And those recordings have already helped bust a string of alleged mischief makers and assailants.

Last month, cameras near Royal Pizza captured images of a man sucker-punching another in the aftermath of St. Patrick's Day.

Bower also used cameras around his East Third Street home to identify a partygoer who urinated in the gas tank of a car that belonged to his wife, Jessica, and another pair of vandals who threw a paint can through the car's back window.

The cameras have also helped solve a number of hit-and-runs on Main and East streets, Bower said.

Eye in the sky

While most of the businesses in-

stalled camera systems to protect their stores, taken together they can be a public safety tool, Bower said.

The corner of East and Main to Restaurant 112 is under constant watch. So are locations near Naps Pizza, Ultrabasic and Good Old Days on East Street.

On perennial party spot Fetterman Avenue, 10 cameras watch the entrance to the alley, along with most of its length, Bower said.

"You can tell who came into the alley, when, and what kind of car they left in," he said.

In the coming weeks, cameras will also be going up on Market Square and other Main Street locations.

And those are just the cameras involved in Bower's network. Other restaurants and stores have camera systems not linked to the larger network. When walking on Main Street, Bower said he assumes he's



Press Enterprise/Bill Hughes

ERIC BOWER, at home in Bloomsburg on Friday, talks about his surveillance system. It covers many of the popular congregating spots in town. The video screen shows the sidewalk outside a downtown business. Bower's cat, Fozzie, appears to be watching the screen.

on camera.

New streetlighting on Main between East and Iron streets has improved the cameras' ability to cap-

ture action, he noted.

"It's like it's still daylight out there," Bower said.

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Hop To It

Get your kids on the bunny trail with Easter egg hunts

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'American' girl



Hannigan signs on for reunion of 'Pie' cast

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WEATHER

TODAY: Rain, cooler
HIGH TEMP: 51°
PRECIPITATION: 85%
TONIGHT: Downpours
LOW TEMP: 45°
PRECIPITATION: 80%
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Girl, 13, charged in bomb threat

Chief says student at Central confessed

By **SUSAN SCHWARTZ**
Press Enterprise Writer

SOUTH CENTRE TWP. — A 13-year-old girl faces charges for making the bomb threat at Central Columbia Middle School on Wednesday, and charges are pending against a second 13-year-old girl, says Police Chief Bill Richendrfer.

The girl who was charged confessed to Middle School Principal Chad Heintzelman, but didn't say why she did it, the chief said.

An assembly of the entire student body was moved to the high school auditorium after someone found the word "bomb" and a time written on a stall in the girls bathroom, according to officials.

School staff reviewed surveillance tape showing who was going in and out of the bathroom to see who might have left the message, Richendrfer said.

Then, they interviewed students. After the girl confessed, school officials called police.

"The school solved it and called us," Richendrfer said.

Sgt. Marc Fedder filed charges of conspiracy and making a bomb threat in a public school against the girl. The charges will be handled by juvenile court, he said. In the meantime, she was released to her parents.

This was the second bomb threat at Central Columbia in recent weeks. Police arrested an 18-year-old in connection with the first threat, which took place March 28 at the high school.

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Vagrant on pilgrimage



Press Enterprise/Bill Hughes

WALTER KEISTER, 60, lifts his head in prayer along Route 11 in Scott Township on Friday afternoon.

By **KRISTIN BAVER**
Press Enterprise Writer

SCOTT TWP. — Fed up with life, Walter Keister gave away most of his belongings and took to the road.

For the last 17 years, Keister, 60, has lived as a vagrant. He sleeps in a tent, usually in a patch of woods or on the banks of a river.

Yesterday, he lugged about 50 pounds of gear as he ambled down Route 11 here, headed for the National Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus near Hazleton. In one hand was a gallon jug of fruit punch. In the other, a half-empty gallon of chocolate milk.

Some passers-by give him money or a ride. Others call the cops.

En route to Hazleton-area shrine, 'tourist' stops to talk

In fact, about once a week, Keister finds himself face-to-face with a lawman. "Some people who do this have serious mental problems," he says.

In 2009, he was cited for unreasonable noise in Tamqua, court records say. But usually, police just check his identity and send him on his way.

"Some people call me homeless," he says. "Technically, I'm homeless."

But he considers himself more a full-time backpacker. "I just take a lot of breaks."

'Prayer life'

Keister doesn't talk much of his life before he started living in a tent. "It was a nightmare," he says.

He grew up in Lewisburg, in a middle-class family with seven siblings. His mother still lives in Milton, but it's been over a year since he last saw her.

Keister says he spent time studying at what was then Bloomsburg State College. At some point, he was a U.S. Marine and an avid golfer.

At 25, he sprained his back jumping off the diving board. See **VAGRANT** back page

Danville school director defends business manager

By **JOHN-ERIK KOSLOSKY**
Press Enterprise Writer

DANVILLE — Business Manager Richard Snodgrass is taking the fall for problems he had little control over, one school director believes.

Snodgrass endured "three years of turmoil" under the district's previous superintendent and was put under great pressure by the board over that time, said Director Steve Schooley.

He deserved the chance to sit down with the board and discuss his job performance before directors moved to dis-

miss him, Schooley says.

But Schooley has only one ally in his support of Snodgrass. Seven directors voted to end his employment Tuesday, and they plan to immediately shift Snodgrass into a lesser role if he decides to stay for the remaining two years on his contract.

But if Snodgrass does stay, he'll continue collecting his \$93,000 salary.

Superintendent David Price said he did not want to share his opinion of the longtime business manager with the public. But Price said he evaluated Snodgrass and shared his

opinion with the board.

"I've been very candid with my assessment of Mr. Snodgrass," he said.

Price said he has overseen a few different business managers in his 12 years as a superintendent, so he has some broader perspective, even if he has worked with Snodgrass for just 10 months.

"I think I have a solid basis," Price said.

Paying for two?

Snodgrass is the only top administrator left who had served throughout the tenure. Please see **DEFENDS** back page

CSIU's new leader to earn \$205,000

By **KRISTIN BAVER**
Press Enterprise Writer

MONTANDON — The Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit's new CEO will earn \$205,000 when he takes over.

That's at the low end of what the agency's board was preparing to offer — up to \$250,000.

And Kevin Singer's starting salary is nearly \$100,000 less than the man he's replacing. Retiring Executive Director Robert Witten will earn about \$298,000 this year.

Singer, a superintendent in Topeka, Kan., earns \$200,000 there.

He starts at CSIU in July.

Three of the 16 directors at a special meeting last week had voted against Singer's hire, with Mount Carmel Area Director Charles Mannello calling the salary range "too extravagant."

Bloomsburg Area's Frank Peters voted against the deal along with Mannello and Shamokin Area's Charles Carpenter.

Some home districts had asked their representatives not to. Please see **CSIU** back page