

Auction set for Moose building

By Lisa Helem
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DELRAN — Members of Riverside Moose Lodge 279 have closed their building and scheduled a July 15 sealed-bid auction for the lodge and property on St. Mihiel Drive.

The local chapter still exists and meets elsewhere, but closed the building June 1, according to Bob Soto, membership committee chairman for the New Jersey Region of Moose International.

"It's the decline in membership that does it. You have to have a certain amount of members to run an organization, and if your overhead overwhelms you, it's very sad, but you are going to lose the momentum," Soto said.

Although he would not provide financial details, Soto said the money problems stemmed from decreasing membership, not poor management. "Lodges close on attrition from time to time, so this is nothing new," he said.

Founded in 1910 in Riverside, the lodge moved to its current building in the mid-1950s, he said. According to the most recent figures from Moose International, the governing body of the fraternal group, the chapter had about 1,130 members in January 2002.

Since then, lodge membership — drawn largely from Delran, Riverside and Cinnaminson — had dropped to about 900, said a member who did not want to be identified.

Over the past few months, Moose officials met with lodge members to discuss whether they would remain in the building or sell it, said Moose International Director General and Chief Executive Officer Donald Ross.

"There was not enough interest among the members to keep it open. We had tried on at least one occasion to call the membership together. Attempts to reorganize have proven to be unsuccessful," he said.

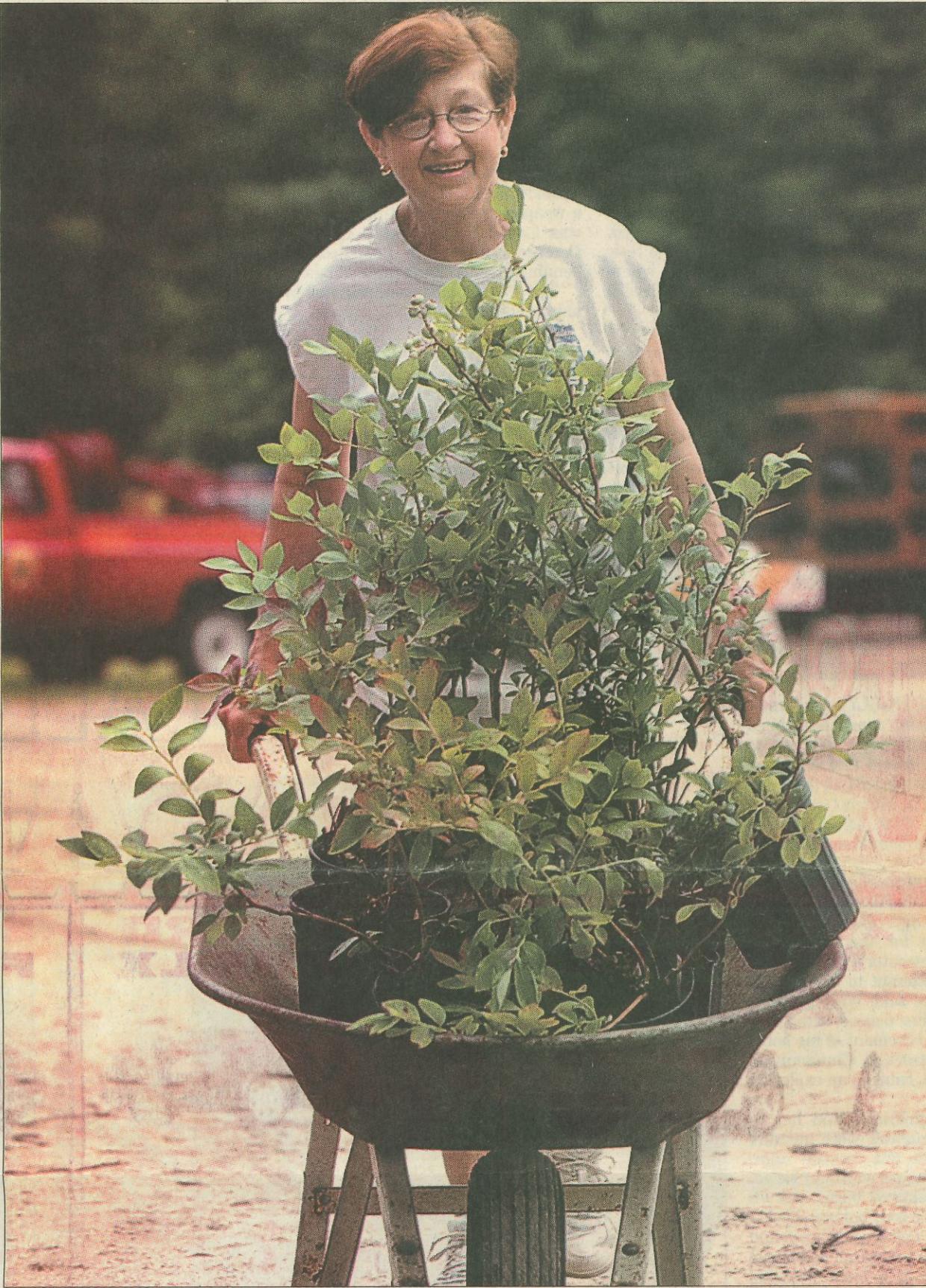
Ross offered no financial details, but said the closing was unrelated to the January 2002 closing of Moose Lodge 1135 in Pemberton Township. That lodge was expelled from the national organization.

He said as long as Moose lodge members maintain their dues and semi-monthly meetings, they could retain their chapter charter.

Members have been meeting at the Turner Lodge in Riverside, said one member.

"It's the decline in membership that does it. You have to have a certain amount of members to run an organization..."

Bob Soto
Moose International



BCT staff photos/DENNIS MCDONALD

Whitesbog Garden Club member Ellen Terry wheels a load of blueberry bushes to sell yesterday at the 20th annual Whitesbog Blueberry Festival in Pemberton Township.

Festival missing a key component: Berries

By Lauren Janis
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PEMBERTON TOWNSHIP — The sun was shining, the skies were clear and it was a perfect day for the 20th annual Whitesbog Blueberry Festival except for one small detail: the blueberries weren't blue.

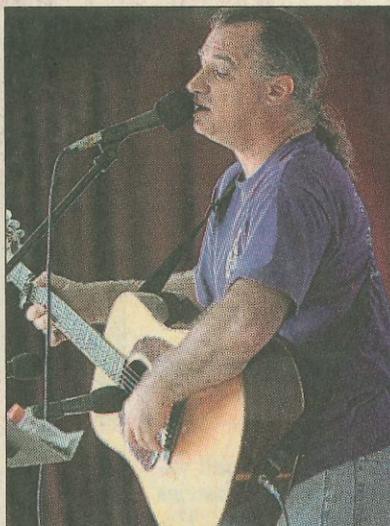
"We have a real nice crop of blueberries, the best we've had in years," said Stephan Thompson, executive director of Whitesbog Preservation Trust, which runs the yearly event. "Only they're not ripe yet. Ninety-

eight percent of the blueberries are not ripe for picking."

The unseasonably cool and wet spring may have kept local blueberries green this year, yet the show still went on yesterday. Thompson said bluer fruit was imported from Hammonton for the festival and eager berry-eaters still enjoyed plenty of blue treats, from blueberry pie to blueberry muffins, and from blueberry-topped funnel cakes to blueberry smoothies.

The Whitesbog Blueberry Festival celebrates the fruit that was orig-

See BERRIES B2



Singer/songwriter Dave Orleans performs during the Whitesbog Blueberry Festival yesterday in Pemberton Township.

See MOOSE B2

Hundreds show they 'care' during annual United Way event

By Brian Scheid
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BURLINGTON TOWNSHIP — On a typical Friday, Howard Schneck of Mount Laurel would spend the day in his air-conditioned office, typing codes into his computer.

Last Friday, however, Schneck and some of his co-workers from Computer Sciences Corp. in Moorestown spent the day chipping, peeling and painting under the hot sun.

"This is much less stress," said Schneck, a manager at Computer Sciences.

"And much more fun," added Schneck's co-worker, Dot Steele of Richboro, Pa.

"Maybe it's a little dirtier," added Steele as she

wiped a streak of white paint from her brow.

Hundreds of employees from 16 businesses throughout Burlington County took part in Friday's 11th annual Day of Caring. The event, organized by the United Way of Burlington County, allows businesses to have their employees volunteer at nonprofit agencies.

"It's a great way for people to get involved in the community," said Christine Meagher, a spokeswoman for United Way. "For agencies, it helps them finish projects they otherwise wouldn't have time for."

About a dozen Computer Sciences employees volunteered for work at the headquarters of Crossroads Program Inc. in Burlington Township, a initiative that helps and houses new teen mothers from throughout the state, ages 15 to 18, and educates them on their new roles as parents.

The volunteers spent most of the day at the headquarters on Jacksonville Road painting a shed, waterproofing a fire escape and painting white trim. Lynn Millard, Crossroads' program manager, said the Day of Caring also gave volunteers exposure to different charitable agencies throughout the county they may have never known existed.

"This gives us a chance to meet people from a totally different area of work," Millard said. "We're human service and they're business, but we're finding we have a lot of common ground."

Millard said employees from various companies have been volunteering at Crossroads since Day of Caring began in 1992.

Meagher said about 21 companies volunteered for Day of Caring, but some will be working later this year.

en car, police said.

Pem. Twp. police nab suspect in coin thefts

PEMBERTON TOWNSHIP — A Browns Mills man was charged after he was caught trying to break into the coin boxes at an automated car wash, police said.

Michael Berkley, 44, was arrested at around midnight Monday by officers who had conducted surveillance at the Firehouse Car Wash on Firehouse Lane in the Country Lakes section due to several recent thefts there, police said.

According to police, the officers observed Berkley as he "cased" the area and then tried to break into one of the coin boxes. He was arrested without incident. His vehicle was seized pending forfeiture proceedings, police said.

Berkley was charged with possession of burglary tools, criminal mischief, attempted burglary and theft.

He was lodged in Burlington County Jail in Mount Holly in lieu of \$15,000 bail, police said.

COMMUNITY

Construction to begin on bridge in Florence

FLORENCE — The county High Department will begin repairing the Burlington-Columbus Road Bridge tomorrow, officials said.

One lane of alternating traffic will be maintained during the construction, which officials said would involve replacing the bridge's deteriorated timber deck. Construction will take approximately one week and will take place between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., officials said.

The bridge is one-quarter mile east of Old York Road and spans the Assiscunk Creek.

jured. The house was later razed.

Wise sustained burns over 70 percent of his body but managed to walk away. Police said they found him hiding behind an industrial building about a block from his house, where he was apprehended and taken to Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia.

Wise was released from the hospital in April.

Prior to the fire, Wise threatened to kill the woman and the girl while armed with a knife, Smith said.

Wise was charged with two counts of aggravated arson June 3, authorities said. If convicted on all counts, he faces up to 65 years in prison. He is free on \$10,000 bail.

Whitesbog fest missing its berries

BERRIES From B1

inally cultivated in the small village here. At first, blueberries just grew in the wild. Yet in 1916, Elizabeth White, daughter of cranberry farmer J.J. White, along with Frederick Coville, a researcher with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, developed the cultivated blueberry, the fruit commonly recognized today.

Eighty-seven years later, that discovery is celebrated with a festival, featuring local crafts, Pine-lands music performances, pie-eating contests, antique tractor displays, demonstrations by area conservation groups, native plant sales and plenty of food. Thompson estimated 5,000 people attended yesterday's event.

"I like to see the crafts that people in the area make," said Lise Mainor, who lives in Pemberton Township. She looked at jewelry as she clutched a bag full of blueberry-flavored bagels. "I also like to hear about the different conservation groups in the area."

Ross Sullivan, 8, who lives in the Browns Mills section of Pemberton Township, said, "My favorite part is the puppets," as he held up a brand new dog marionette he got at a craft booth.



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