

## Board makes tough choices on 2010-2011 budget

The Colonial Board of School Directors ordered cuts of more than \$1.65 million to decrease the projected real estate tax increase from the 7.0 percent approved in the Preliminary Budget to 4.93 percent in the Proposed Final Budget approved in May. The Board hoped to trim even more from the budget before a final spending plan was approved on June 17.

“We have examined the budget very carefully and will continue to do all we can to approve a plan that is fair to the taxpayers while avoiding layoffs and not jeopardizing the quality education or level of security we provide our students,” said School Board Finance Committee Chair Hope Luken. “I wish we did not have to make any cuts, but the economy and out-of-control state mandates have

placed us in a difficult situation.”

Among the \$1.65 million in budget cuts are 11.5 staff positions that have either been eliminated or include retirees who will not be replaced.

For the first time in more than 30 years, the Colonial School District is facing decreases in its tax base, real estate transfer taxes, earned income taxes and interest earnings in the same fiscal year. At the same time, costs for unfunded state mandates for special education, transportation and contributions to the Pennsylvania School Employees Retirement Fund continue to increase. The District’s tab for those programs in the coming budget is more than \$25 million.

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## Garden party: Planting the seeds of savings

More than 60 members of the Colonial School District (CSD) community gathered on May 15 to break ground for the District’s school garden. The garden, located on the Angus Tract property of Erdenheim Farm in Whitemarsh Township, is a cooperative venture between CSD and Whole Foods Markets.

The idea for the garden began with Plymouth Whitemarsh High School junior Ross Levin who has been suggesting ideas for the school to become more environmentally friendly.

“The garden will bring healthy, local, sustainable food into the cafeterias,” Levin said. “It will reduce the school’s dependence on highly processed, industrially grown food produced by large corporations. Instead of eating food made with tons of fossil fuels in ways that damage the planet, we’ll



**(L to R):** Plymouth Whitemarsh High School students Andrea Fondots, Jessie Moore, Tori Totaro and Steve Roscioli display some of the produce planted in the Colonial School District’s school garden.

be providing food that’s produced in a way that helps the community and the environment.”

Levin also hopes the garden will bring people together, which was evident from the turnout on May 15.

“The sense of student pride and the community involvement on planting day was just amazing to witness,” said CSD Director of Food

Services Lori McCoy, RD, SNS. “There were students, staff members, School Board members, parents and community members who all put on their boots, rolled up their sleeves and made this garden come to life.”

The volunteers planted tomatoes, yellow bell peppers, jalapeno peppers, poblano peppers, rosemary,

**See School garden, Pg. 2**

## AVID students have pick of colleges

Three years ago, 15 Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS) sophomores signed contracts to take part in the new Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at the school. PWHS was the first school in Pennsylvania to implement the nationally recognized program that targets students in the academic middle and prepares them for college eligibility and success. All 15 seniors in the AVID program graduated this month and plan to enroll in college.

“The PWHS AVID site team is extremely pleased with the outcome of all 15 of our AVID seniors moving onto postsecondary educational settings,” said Dan Balek, Assistant Principal and AVID Site Administrator. “Achieving

**See AVID, Pg. 4**

# Quick Facts

Location.....	Plymouth Meeting, Pa. Serving Conshohocken Borough and Plymouth and Whitemarsh townships
District Population.....	Approximately 40,336
Number of Employees .....	720 374 teachers 50 Administrators 296 Support Staff
Schools.....	Plymouth Whitemarsh High School Colonial Middle School Colonial Elementary School Conshohocken Elementary School Plymouth Elementary School Ridge Park Elementary School Whitemarsh Elementary School
Total Enrollment.....	4,678
Special Education.....	791
Gifted.....	209
Low Income.....	15%
Average Class Size.....	19-22
2009-10 Budget .....	\$92,580,000
Actual Instruction Expense Per Student .....	\$10,651.04
Highly Qualified Teachers .....	100%

## School Board

Gary J. Johnson .....	School Board President
Susan Moore .....	School Board Vice President
Bernie Brady .....	School Board Member
Hope Luken .....	School Board Member
Kathleen Oxberry.....	School Board Member
Tom Sigafos.....	School Board Member
Beth Suchsland.....	School Board Member
Alan Tabachnick.....	School Board Member
Mitch Zimmer.....	School Board Member

## Administration

Dr. Vincent F. Cotter.....	Superintendent
Dr. MaryEllen Gorodetzer .....	Asst. Superintendent
Joseph P. Bickleman.....	Chief Financial Officer
Karen Berk.....	Director of Pupil Services and Special Education
Andrew Boegly.....	Chief Information Officer
Terry Yemm .....	Director of Operations
Richard Hartz .....	Director of Human Resources

## Contact Numbers

District Office.....	610-834-1670
District Office Fax .....	610-834-7535
Conshohocken Elementary School.....	610-828-0362
Conshohocken Elementary School Fax .....	610-828-4582
Plymouth Elementary School .....	610-825-8190
Plymouth Elementary School Fax.....	610-825-7853
Ridge Park Elementary School .....	610-825-1083
Ridge Park Elementary School Fax.....	610-825-7983
Whitemarsh Elementary School.....	610-828-9092
Whitemarsh Elementary School Fax.....	610-828-1516
Colonial Elementary School.....	610-941-0426
Colonial Elementary School Fax .....	610-834-8701
Colonial Middle School.....	610-275-5100
Colonial Middle School Fax .....	610-278-2447
Plymouth Whitemarsh High School .....	610-825-1500
Plymouth Whitemarsh High School Fax.....	610-832-0766

# News & Notes

## School garden

chives, dill, basil and sage. Other produce to be planted this spring includes green beans, cucumbers and squash. Staff members and volunteers will tend to the garden over the summer while school is not in session.

Future plans for the garden include adding portable structures or “hoop houses” that will enable the growing of produce all-year round. Maria Bellino, the District’s Science Curriculum Supervisor, is also working to incorporate aspects of the school garden into the curriculum.

“Growing our own organic produce is an incredible opportunity that we have for providing better quality food and better nutrition for our students,” Mrs. McCoy said. “In addition, the garden will have a future impact on our budget, the environment and classroom learning.”

Mrs. McCoy noted that the Food Services Department currently spends about \$4,500 per month on fresh produce. The school garden is expected to reduce that cost in the coming years.



**(L to R):** Colonial School District (CSD) Director of Operations Terry Yemm, teacher Sue Duncan, CSD Director of Food Services Lori McCoy, Whitemarsh Foundation (WF) Board Chair Hugh Molton, WF Executive Director Kim Sheppard, student Ross Levin, CSD School Board members Gary Johnson, Beth Suchsland and Kathleen Oxberry and CSD Turf Management Director Gene Kelly break ground for the CSD school garden.

## Budget

As the budget is currently structured, the 4.9 percent real estate tax increase translates to \$125 more on the District’s median assessed value of \$146,990 or a \$85 rise for every \$100,000 of assessed property value. In addition to the tax increase, the Proposed Final Budget uses \$1,349,751 of the \$2,564,461 exceptions approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The exceptions allow the District to exceed the Act 1 real estate tax index of 2.9 percent. The budget also includes the use of \$5,085,000 of the District’s projected June 30, 2010 fund balance of \$10,717,148.

## News & Notes

### Nuneviller named new PWHS principal

At their May 20 public business meeting, the Colonial Board of School Directors approved the appointment of Heather Nuneviller as the new principal of Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS). Mrs. Nuneviller has served as a middle school principal in the Manheim Township School District since 2007. She also has experience as an assistant high school and middle school principal.

"Heather Nuneviller has a proven track record as an administrator who is committed to providing a safe and optimum learning environment for all students," said Colonial School District Superintendent Dr. Vincent F. Cotter. "She has quickly earned the respect of her students and staff in each building where she has served as an administrator.

"Heather believes in the continuous improvement model that has been at the core of our Above and Beyond program for the past 10 years," Dr. Cotter added. "We are confident that she is the right person to keep Plymouth Whitemarsh High School moving forward as one of the top secondary schools in the region."

Mrs. Nuneviller is currently working towards a Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Penn State University. She holds a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from Penn State and a B.S. in Elementary Education from Bloomsburg University. She began her career in education as a teacher in the Pottsgrove School District.

"I feel incredibly blessed to have this opportunity," Mrs. Nuneviller said. "I loved the middle school environment and had no plans to leave. But when this opportunity presented itself, because of the reputation of PW, where I come from and what I believe, I knew I would fit in here.

Mrs. Nuneviller will replace Dr. Monica Sullivan who is retiring. Mrs. Nuneviller will begin her new position on July 1.



Heather Nuneviller

### PWHS is first high school to receive ADL Award

Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS) received the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) 2010 Barry Morrison Courageous Conversations Award at the organization's closing board meeting on April 21. The award is a tribute to the ADL's regional director and is given annually to a local school or community that has exhibited creativity and courage in engaging students in a dialogue about diversity through the No Place for Hate® project. PWHS is the first high school to receive this award.

PWHS was among the first schools in Montgomery County and the tri-state region to be certified as a No Place for Hate School® by the ADL in 2006. The program empowers participants to challenge anti-Semitism, racism, hate, and bigotry in all forms. PWHS has also participated in the organization's peer training program.

"Each fall since 2005, groups of Plymouth Whitemarsh High School student leaders have participated in our peer training program, enabling them

to lead mini-workshops with younger students that deal with issues of bias and bullying in school," said ADL Associate Regional Director Randi Boyette. "Plymouth Whitemarsh High School has also been represented at our annual Youth and Cyberbullying conferences. These are just some of the ways that ADL and the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School community have worked together over the years and why PWHS is a truly deserving recipient of the Barry Morrison Courageous Conversations Award."



(L to R) Carmen Mitchell, Samantha Berk, Barry Morrison (Regional Director, ADL Eastern PA/Delaware Region), Michaela Pommells, Assistant Project Director, *No Place for Hate*®, Dr. Vincent F. Cotter (Superintendent), Lauren Stern, Dr. Monica Sullivan (Principal), Carlos Santiago, Gary Johnson (School Board President), Margaux Wenraub, Ryan Kilcoyne, Pooja Dindigal, Kaitlyn Chabaud, Tracey Ambuka (Faculty Advisor), Lisa Friedlander (Project Director, *No Place for Hate*®), Yakeita Sawyer (Faculty Advisor), Jim Carr (Faculty Advisor).

# News & Notes

## AVID

this did not exceed the team's goal — it just simply started the process. We all knew these students had the ability to move into rigorous coursework and ultimately college.

"Now the real work begins," Balek added. "It is important to remember that AVID is designed to help students develop the requisite skills necessary for sustainability in college. The AVID teachers have provided the foundation and now the students must build upon it. We will know we have met our goal when our AVID students return to share their successes at the postsecondary level and ultimately, in their careers."

The 15 PWHS students have been offered more than \$650,000 in scholarships to attend highly selective colleges and universities including Lehigh University, Muhlenberg College, Moravian College, Albright College, the University

## Colonial teachers honored by 3e Institute

Whitemarsh Elementary School (WE) teachers Susan Hope and Simie Krieger were again among the select group of teachers to receive a 2010 Educator 500 award at the 3e Institute's Annual Business and Education Leadership Forum held April 27 at the Union League in Philadelphia. Also earning the recognition were Ridge Park Elementary School teachers Jennifer Esmonde, Terri Wolfheimer, Caryn Young, Natalie Cook and Krista Bathurst.

Krieger, a second grade teacher, and Hope, a kindergarten teacher, collaborated on a recycling/art project which resulted in three-dimensional sculptures made from discarded household items. The classes focused on "Reducing our Carbon Footprint" (science/environmental studies), shapes (geometry unit), creating abstract sculptures (art studies) and writing (balanced literacy) during the project. The Ridge Park group was honored for its "Together, Working, Learning, Succeeding" initiative.

The Educator 500 are considered entrepreneurial educators who believe all children can succeed, who pursue educational solutions to challenges in our schools and who have the vision and courage to be value-creating change agents of education.

of Tampa, Temple University and more.

"I entered AVID barely knowing what it was, and I am leaving AVID a changed student," said Shauna Cassidy. "I thought I would have to just go to community college, but AVID helped me and pushed me so that I had a choice between three schools – one even offering an academic scholarship."

Cassidy plans to attend Gwynedd Mercy College.

The AVID program emphasizes organization, effective questioning techniques, writing in all subject areas and critical thinking. Students are responsible for their own learning and encouraged to practice critical reading.

As sophomores, none of the 15 current senior AVID students took an honors level course. As seniors, each is enrolled in either honors level courses, Advanced Placement level courses or both.

**"I entered AVID barely knowing what it was, and I am leaving AVID a changed student. I thought I would have to just go to community college, but AVID helped me and pushed me so that I had a choice between three schools – one even offering an academic scholarship."**

Shauna Cassidy, PWHS senior

## Swartz receives honor

Colonial Middle School (CMS) teacher and Student Council advisor Annette Swartz has been named the 2010 Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils (PASC) District 12 Middle Level Advisor of the Year. Swartz received the honor based upon letters submitted on her behalf by CMS Assistant Principal Maico Azcona and Student Council President Brett Paul. The PASC Middle Level Advisor of the Year will be announced at the state conference in Scranton, Pa. on Friday, October 8.



(L to R): Brett Paul, Annette Swartz, Jim Finnemeyer (PASC Executive Director) and Maico Azcona.

## News & Notes

### Gamble received a "Voices of Inspiration" Award

Whitemarsh Elementary School teacher Jared Gamble was honored last night as one of 23 finalists for the 4th Annual Voices of Inspiration Award for Teaching Excellence sponsored by Freedom Credit Union and Montgomery County Intermediate Unit. As a finalist, Gamble received a \$500 award. He was one of 575 teachers nominated county wide and one of 74 from the Colonial School District. Additionally, Colonial Middle School earned a \$500 cash award having the second most teachers nominated, 40, from any one school in the county.



(L to R): Donna Drizin (Whitemarsh Elementary School Principal), Kristen Gamble, Bob Gamble, Merrill Reese and Jared Gamble.

### Colonial Elementary School named a "Best Community for Music Education"

Colonial Elementary School has been named a "Best Community for Music Education" by the National Association of Music Merchants in the organization's 11<sup>th</sup> annual survey. The survey acknowledges schools and districts nationwide for their commitment to and support of music education. Districts were measured across curricular and programmatic criteria as well as public support of their music programs.

### PWHS honors three alumni

The Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS) Distinguished Graduates Organization (DGO) added three new members during its 25th annual induction ceremony on April 30. Dr. Elizabeth Hammond Yonson, Mr. Bernard G. Madden and Dr. Everitt F. Binns joined more than 100 other graduates honored by the DGO.

Dr. Yonson, a 1969 PWHS graduate and Superintendent of Schools in the Morrisville, Pa. School District, was recognized for achievement in Academics.

Mr. Madden, a 1981 PWHS graduate and Director of the Global Creative Network for Merck and Company, Inc. was honored for achievement in the Arts.

Dr. Binns, a 1968 PWHS graduate and Executive Director of the Eastern Pennsylvania Emergency Medical Services Council which includes Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton and Schuylkill counties, was honored for achievement in Public Service.

Distinguished graduates are recognized in the areas of Academics, Arts, Athletics, Business, Humanities, and Public Service and serve as examples of excellence for undergraduate students.

### Chang named new PWHS Head Football Coach

During a special meeting on February 3, the Colonial Board of School Directors approved the appointment of Dan Chang as Head Football Coach at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School. Chang, a health and physical education teacher at Colonial Middle School, served as an assistant coach at North Penn High School for the past five years. He has primarily been responsible for the offensive and defensive lines at North Penn. A number of the players he coached have earned post-season honors. In addition, he has had numerous players advance to the collegiate level – including four at the Division I level.

"I think PW is getting the best coach at his age as there is in the state of Pennsylvania," North Penn Head Coach Dick Beck said. "Dan is the one guy on my staff that I least wanted to lose."



**Dan Chang**

Chang was a three-year starter on both offense and defense for the Knights before graduating from North Penn in 2001. He was the captain and Most Valuable Player of the team his senior season when he was named First Team All-Area at center and Third Team All-State at defensive end. He replaces John Staudenmayer who resigned after being the head coach for four years.

# Student News

## Colonial students perform well in academic competitions

A Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) student and six Colonial Middle School (CMS) students have qualified for the Technology Student Association (TSA) National Conference based upon their performance at the Pennsylvania TSA Conference. PWHS student Mark Forsberg placed first in the Extemporaneous Presentation event. Last year, Forsberg qualified for the nationals in the same event and placed third. That is the highest that a Colonial School District (CSD) student has placed in the TSA national competition.

The CMS team of Anya Forsberg, Samantha Horry, Seth Horry, Carley Hauer, Sabrina Koenig and Louie Wein placed third in the Medical Challenge event. They all will represent the District at the TSA National Conference in Baltimore, Md. at the end of June.

### Odyssey of the Mind

Three CSD teams competed in the Odyssey of the Mind (OM) state competition. Two teams from Colonial Elementary School (CES) and one from CMS advanced through the regional competition.

The CES team composed of Scott Horry, Jack O'Brien, Hope Wallace, Cindy Chea, Savanna Goldstein, Brandon Cohen and Mason Beausoleil placed first in Division I Discovered Treasures at the regional competition held March 13 at North Penn High School.

The CES team of Raquel Dunoff, Amanda Colton, Josh Kurman, Angela Richter, Lizzie Stricklin, Mason Jones and Nathaniel Reichley placed third overall and first in spontaneous problem solving in Division I Food Court.

## All-state musicians

Senior, Elana Gallo represented Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) at the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) All-State chorus in Pittsburgh in April. Gallo qualified based on her audition at the Region VI Chorus in March. She is the ninth PWHS student to reach the All-State level in Chorus since 1994.

Junior Julia Campbell represented PWHS at the PMEA All-State Concert Band, also in Pittsburgh in April. Campbell, who plays the flute, qualified based upon her auditions at the Region Band Festival in March. She had also qualified for the Regional Orchestra Festival. Campbell is the fifth PWHS student to reach the All-State level in Concert Band since 2004.

The CMS team of Joey Angelo, Allison Cohen, Jamie Ehrlich, Nikki Knudsen, Aaron Paskin, Ray Sellers and Jhanna Simon earned first place in Division II Food Court.

### Debate Team

PWHS students Luke Mercurio and Matt Pressman qualified for the state debate competition by placing second and third respectively at the District 10 State Qualifier for Lincoln Douglas Debate.

### DECA

PWHS student Jordan Paul represented the school at the DECA National Conference in Louisville, Ky. in April. Paul placed fifth in Principles of Hospitality and Tourism at the state conference in Hershey earlier this year. Also at the state conference, Lara Aiyegbusi received a medal for receiving the second highest role play score in Apparel & Accessories Marketing. Margaux Weinraub and Allison Weinstock tied for fifth place in Hospitality Services.

### FBLA

PWHS student Charlie Tabachnick placed fourth in Business Communications at the Pennsylvania Future Business Leaders of America State Leadership Conference. Tabachnick was one of seven students who qualified for the event. He placed second at the regional event behind Philip Yaure. Yaure did not attend the state conference because of a conflict with the Senior Class

**See Competitions, Pg. 7**

### PWHS student Donoghue wins art contest



Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) student Shawn Donoghue won Best Digital Photograph in the juried Pennsylvania State Education Association Touch to the Future Art Show. Approximately 1,200 pieces of artwork were submitted by 28 school districts throughout Bucks and Montgomery Counties.



Emma Sassi and Jenna Fitzpatrick joined their Ridge Park Elementary School classmates in planting trees and flowers and removing debris from Wetherill Park on Earth Day.

# Student News

## Conshohocken mosaic mural



Local artist Lisa James (back right) poses with students from Amy Spooner's first-grade class. All students in the school, as well as parents and other volunteers under James' direction, created a mosaic tile mural in the main first-floor hallway of Conshohocken Elementary School. The tiles are made from pieces of mirror, broken plates, clay pieces made by the students in art class and more. The project was sponsored by the school's Parent Teacher Organization. Several years ago, James worked on a mosaic tile mural at Ridge Park Elementary School.

## Staudenmayer takes third at PIAA Wrestling Championships

Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS) junior John Michael Staudenmayer won the bronze medal in the 160-pound weight class at the PIAA AAA Wrestling Championships last weekend. Staudenmayer dropped his opening match, 4-1, to Tyler Buckwalter of Central Mountain. He then reeled off five straight wins, including a 3-2 decision over Lewistown's Colton Spade in the consolation final. Staudenmayer's third-place finish is the highest for a PWHS wrestler since Justin Giovinco won the state title in 1998 and 1999.

## District-wide art show returns

After a year hiatus because of renovations in Colonial Elementary School (CES), the annual Colonial School District Art Show was exhibited in March. Pieces of art from select students in grades K-12 were displayed throughout the first floor of CES. At right, Brian Jeong, who will attend Plymouth Elementary School next fall, stands by older brother Sean's art work.



## Competitions

Trip. Also at the regional competition, Corey Lutz placed third in Accounting I, Will Magrann was second in Personal Finance, Max Levin was second in Cyber Security, Dan Bryant was fourth in Sports Management and Stuti Santosh, Brandon Johnson and Michael Caplan teamed to place third in Banking and Financial Systems.

### World Language Competition

Five PWHS students were finalists from among the 118 students from 19 Montgomery County public and private schools that took part in the recent James J. Doyle Oral Proficiency Contest sponsored by the Montgomery County Association of Teachers of Foreign Languages. Contests were held in four different languages. Rosa Hargrove placed first in French III, while Matt Gianitsos placed second in French I. Brittany MacLean placed second in Advanced Spanish, while Valerie Nieman was second in Spanish III and Sarah Lotkowski finished second in Spanish II.

### Geography Bee

CMS student Christian Hoban won the school's Geography Bee in January and scored well enough on the written exam to qualify for the Pennsylvania Geography Bee at Penn State University in April.

### Award-winning writers

CMS student Gabrielle Pludo was one of ten winners nationwide in Scholastic Book Club's "Best Book of the Year" Book Report Contest. She wrote a winning essay about the book "Alphas" by Lisi Harrison. As a winner, Gabrielle received two 25-volume "Best Books of 2009" Libraries, one to take home and one for the CMS library.

CMS students Chirag Agarwal and Hannah Entwistle received honorable mention in the Letters About Literature Contest sponsored by the Library of Congress. The students were among 10 students in a pool of 372 in Pennsylvania to receive the honorable mention.

Reaching “Above and Beyond”

# State Champs!:

## PWHS boys’ basketball team captures PIAA AAAA title

The Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS) boys’ basketball team captured their third state title and first since 1997 when they defeated Penn Wood 58-51 in the PIAA AAAA championship game on March 27 in State College. The Colonials were led by 6-foot-10 senior center/forward C.J. Aiken’s 19 points, seven rebounds and five blocked shots. Aiken was named the Pennsylvania Class AAAA boys’ basketball player of the year by the Associated Press. He was joined on the AP All-State First Team by teammate Jalen Bond, a 6-foot-7 junior forward.

Coach Jim Donofrio was named the *Philadelphia Inquirer’s* Southeastern Pennsylvania Boys’ Basketball Coach of the Year. Donofrio led the Colonials to their seventh straight Suburban One League American Conference Championship, a runner-up finish in the District 1 Championship and the state title. PWHS compiled a 30-2 season record. Donofrio now has a 11-year career mark of 258-85, good for a .752 winning percentage.



Members of the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School boys’ basketball team, managers and coaches celebrate their first state title since 1997 at Penn State University’s Bryce Jordan Center on March 27.

The Colonial School District (CSD) is an equal opportunity education institution and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability and/or handicap or age in its admissions procedures, educational programs, services, activities or employment practices as required by Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 and/or any applicable federal statute.

The CSD will assist students who have Limited English Proficiency to participate in all programs, services and activities.

For information regarding civil rights, admissions, grievance procedures, bilingual education and accessibility of programs, services, activities and facilities that are usable by persons with disabilities, contact the Director of Pupil Services, Colonial School District, 230 Flourtown Road, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, 19462.