

## Lively dances show rhythm of America's youthful days

Performance at Daniel Boone Homestead brings culture of newly born nation to life


BY RON DEVLIN  
READING EAGLE

Beneath the rafters of an 18th-century log cabin and with a vibrant fire crackling in an open hearth, a troupe of dancers stepped to the rhythm of fiddle and harpsichord.

Although the Amity Colonial Dancers were performing at the Daniel Boone Homestead, their dress and demeanor revived images of a young nation emerging from the Revolutionary War.

Wearing a bonnet and homespun dress, dancer Becky Hughes of Union Township felt as if she were part of history.

"When you dance like this," said Hughes, 30, a living history devotee, "you step back

 Video of the dancers is available with this story at [readingeagle.com](http://readingeagle.com).

in time."

Recapturing the spirit of America's cultural past is what Susan Speros and Peggy Gingrich had in mind when they founded the Berks County dance troupe in 2005.

Although the dances originated in the British Isles, Speros said, they were widely practiced in homes, inns and other public places in Berks County in the 100 years prior to 1810.

"The dances we perform were definitely popular among Berks County residents," said Speros, an Exeter Township historical preser-



Shelley Brower, left, and Susan Speros perform with other members of the Amity Colonial Dancers at the Daniel Boone Homestead.

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vationist.

At the recent Boone home-stand performance, where their audience included a Cub Scout pack from Birds-

boro, the dancers' repertoire included "The Flowers of Edinburgh," a Scottish country dance, and "Sweet Richard," an English country dance

from 1742.

Helen May of Douglassville, the troupe's harpsichordist, said the music and dances [See *Traditional* >>> B2]

Mary Young



## Compromise sparks more divisiveness

ONE OF the most frequent criticisms President Barack Obama has been his refusal to compromise on his liberal agenda.

All the news programs been beating us over the head with it, so unless you've napping like Rip Van Winkle you're probably aware until this week he had standing firm on not extending the Bush-era tax cut to the wealthy, aka the top 1 percent of U.S. wage earners.

The Republicans believe the tax cuts must be extended for everyone because 1 percent has the best ability to invest in the economy.

They will help the country recover, if the government doesn't dip into their pockets to take more taxes, the Republicans insist.

Well, this week the president agreed to compromise with the Republicans on an extension of tax cuts for all to get, in return, an extension of unemployment benefits.

What did he get for his efforts?

A heap more criticism from both sides.

Democrats called Obama a sellout.

Republicans accused him of being defensive and a liar when he announced the promise.

Even our two Berks county commissioners are on.

"When you lose a fight in politics, it's best to be gracious about it," Commissioner Mark Scott said. "Some real bitterness there didn't think it was the tone going forward for dealing with the other side of the aisle."

Added Commissioner Christian Leinbach: "I blasted the GOP for forcing him into a compromise I didn't like. Did he forge still in a lame duck session? His own party doesn't deal with his liberal tactics."

"He's scared to death of what could happen in January. I thought it was disingenuous when he blasted the GOP."

Democratic Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt didn't take the conversation.

Clerk of Courts Jim Toman did — without taking sides.

The Republican said he was pleased by the tax cut regardless of the president's tone.

"I appreciate the fact I'm not going to be paying couple thousands of dollars in taxes," he said. "I like that the president is willing to compromise and reach a deal."

"Both parties need to step back as far as I'm concerned."

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## For PAL's young tennis players, it's game, set, life

Participants learn about good choices in more than match

BY ERIN NEGLEY  
READING EAGLE

In a packed and noisy Reading gym, children practice balancing balls on tennis rackets and then break to trade volleys.

Before their tennis lesson starts, however, the fledgling tennis players listen to tips for success from Richard A. Ehst, president and chief operating officer of Customers Bank, Wyomissing.

Ehst tells the children that when they have jobs, they should pay themselves first by saving a portion of the money they earn.

He also urges them to not take on too much debt and gives each child a gold dollar.

Welcome to Set Point Tennis, a 16-week program offered to children at the Police Athletic League, a unit of the Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading and Berks County.

Now in its third year and organized by local tennis coach Michael Murphy, the free program teaches children ages 8 to 12 tennis skills and self-confidence.

Plus, Murphy brings in a speaker each week to talk



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Michael Murphy directs Manuel A. Rivera, 7, during Set Point Tennis, a Police Athletic League program that teaches participants about the sport of tennis and the game of life.

about various life lessons and career choices. Ehst was the featured speaker at a recent session.

"We try to use tennis to make positive choices in life," Murphy said.

Murphy of Sinking Spring also organizes a United States Tennis Association

junior tennis league in Berks. He started playing tennis as a boy in Pottsville and emulated tennis legend Arthur Ashe.

"That made me look beyond the Coal Region," he said.

Murphy volunteers his time every week with the program at PAL. The tennis

### Serving life lessons

Michael Murphy, who leads Set Point Tennis, a program for children at the Police Athletic League, Reading, has scheduled these speakers to visit with the children during the 16-week program:

- Richard A. Ehst, president and chief operating officer of Customers Bank, Wyomissing
- John T. Adams, Berks County district attorney
- Dan Emkey, defense at-

torney

- Greg Emkey, surgeon
- Douglas W. White, dentist

### Also, representatives from:

- Albert R. Boscov's staff
- Albright College
- Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Philadelphia Eagles
- Reading Fire Department
- Reading Police Department
- U.S. Rep. Jim Gerlach's staff

lessons get the kids exercising, and the speakers serve as role models.

In prior years, police officers have talked about gun safety. Firefighters have explained what to do in a fire.

Berks County District Attorney John T. Adams plans to speak to the group in January.

"I think it's extremely important to educate our younger children about right and wrong and to hopefully instill in them something that they will choose a law-abiding path in life," Adams said.

Adams especially likes the tennis program's connection to the Olivet Club.

"Their clientele is a clientele we need to reach," he said. "We want to prevent

young people from making the wrong choices."

Most participants are from the neighborhood around the Police Athletic League in the 300 block of Walnut Street, but some come from Mount Penn and Sinking Spring.

The children love the program, said unit director Christine Barlet.

"Tennis isn't something that they're exposed to, being in the inner city," she said. "Our kids really look forward to it."

Luis Marrero, a third-grader at Lauer's Park Elementary, said his first tennis lesson was cool.

"I like it because you can exercise," the 9-year-old said.

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