

# ANGLE and LINE

A Quarterly Newsletter by COWAN ASSOCIATES, INC.

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## BOROUGH OF LANSFORD UPGRADES ITS PLAYGROUNDS WITH COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

by Carl H. Wischner, Sr. Project Manager

The Borough of Lansford, Carbon County, recently made an energetic move to upgrade and renovate playground facilities for the youth of the Borough.

Spearheaded by Karen Burrell, Assistant Secretary for the Borough, who volunteered her time, Ms. Burrell earmarked two existing playgrounds that had old, deteriorated equipment in disrepair.

The play areas and equipment did not meet any of the current safety standards contained in the U.S. Consumer Product

Safety Commission (USCPSC) Handbook for Public Playground Safety, which is the current governing standard for playground safety and design.

Ms. Burrell had a vision to restore the playgrounds and begin to return the recreational facilities in the Borough to where they were in the past when the Borough was a thriving community.

The two playgrounds on which she concentrated were the Ashton Hill Park located adjacent to the community swimming pool near the west end of the Borough, and a playground on Snyder Avenue between Pardee Street and Riley Street near the east end of the Borough.

To obtain funding for the projects, Ms. Burrell prepared grant applications to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and received

grants totaling \$79,000. Ms. Burrell was fully supported by the Borough Parks and Recreation and Lighting Committee, chaired by Robert Gaughan along with Margaret Horowski and Dwight Penberth.

Along with the Committee, the project was also supported by Council President Joseph Genits and

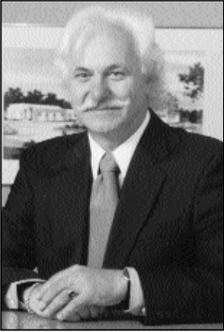
the remaining members of Borough Council. Borough Council was able to appropriate the remaining funding from the Federal Community Development Block Grant program administered by Phyllis Bolton and Stephen Simchak of the Carbon County Office of Planning and Development.

The vision of restoring the park's recreational usage included installing new lampposts and lighting in the Ashton Hill Park, and along a tree-lined walking path along a recreational area that had been lighted in the past. Ms. Burrell researched the style of the Borough lighting of the past and was able to closely match posts and luminaries originally used along Borough streets and pathways. The style selected was



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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Confucius say, "Who lives in glass house, dress in basement." This is an old joke that you may have stumbled across while surfing the internet. And, while doing so, you may as well Google yourself if you haven't yet. You may be surprised by what you find out about yourself, or at least your internet persona living in the Ethernet.

During a recent trial where I testified as an expert witness, I was thoroughly grilled by the adversarial attorney concerning my background – my education, all places and persons with whom I ever worked, all articles I ever wrote and where they were published and, yes, whether my professional engineering license was ever suspended and if I was ever convicted of a crime. The last two questions were the easy ones to answer, but I did struggle with questions about my employers, publications, and other information about me, apparently information the attorney found on the internet. I had difficulty answering his questions as I was not cognizant of that mostly erroneous information.

Thorough background research of anyone's educational and professional credentials and qualifications is to be expected, especially when working in the litigation theater. Vehicular code violations; and criminal, financial and social background search is fair game when limited to publicly available records.

Expert witnesses are used in a wide range of litigation, and their opinions often significantly influence the outcome of a settlement or trial. Many litigation decisions are made on the perceived strategic positions of experts. In court, this may turn into an all-out battle of the experts, especially if you have inexperienced trial attorneys and overzealous, advocating experts. Thorough experts and skillful communicators typically get their names circulated among trial lawyers resulting in referrals, but also in the determination, by certain attorneys, to impeach you if you are on their adversary's side. Of course, these approaches are not uncommon in the often cut-throat competitive business environment as well.

So we need to be prepared, as anything we say or write in the public arena, anything we blog or post on the internet, or when we testify in open court, can be, and will be, discovered. The same thing is true for anything that is written and posted about us by others. There are cases of honest mistaken identity, duplicate or similar names, simple reporting mistakes, and fraudulent attempts to use your name.

During my questioning at my trial testimony, I discovered that I am published and that a paper I wrote about 7 years ago for a presentation at a seminar, and for which I did not receive an honorarium, is available at Amazon.com and Discountbooks.com for \$5.95. My inquiries to the publisher remain unanswered, and I am not willing to invest time and treasure to rectify this situation. I suspect that nobody is getting rich by selling my paper, and I have not yet found it on the best seller list. I am also listed as an expert on referral websites

as if I were part of their organization.

Subsequently, I Googled myself and found that my alter ego persona must be rather wealthy. A newspaper article identified me as the developer of an industrial complex in New Jersey where I merely performed some engineering consulting services; and meeting minutes of a municipal meeting posted on line identified me as the owner and president of a manufacturing facility for which I testified at a zoning hearing. Finally, a commentary criticizing an art exhibit in Orange County, California was signed with my name.

I am just grateful that my private life is very conventional and, by most standards, rather boring. Just imagine what one can find out about personal lives. Now that we all live in the twilight zone of internet presence, it is advisable to keep our private lives in the basement. Also, browse the internet regularly to find out what your Ethernet persona is doing and if any of it is mischievous.

## BOROUGH OF LANSFORD PLAYGROUNDS

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coordinated with Lansford Alive, an organization working to restore downtown Lansford and lighting. The style selected will eventually most likely be used as a standard throughout the Borough.

In order to obtain approval for the project from DCNR, develop a final design and bid a lighting contract, Cowan Associates, Inc. was asked to assist in preparing and processing the final design plans, specifications, and grant. CAI's staff, including experienced engineers, landscape architect, and National Playground Safety Institute Certified Playground Safety Inspector, who have designed numerous playgrounds and parks conforming to the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety, also developed the final technical specifications to bid the lighting contract.

A condition of the grant was that the Borough had to provide matching funds and/or labor as their portion of the project. Ms. Burrell scoured the community for volunteer assistance, who responded overwhelmingly. Borough forces removed old equipment and prepared the area. Through a shared services agreement between Lansford Borough and the Borough of Summit Hill, paving was completed and trees were trimmed. Mr. Lenny Kovatch volunteered and completed the major task of excavation of the play areas and removal of old concrete anchors, and prepared the site for equipment installation. Local businesses, which included Radocha and Sons Excavating and employees of Krajcirik's Auto Garage, provided equipment and assistance. Also, firefighters from the American Fire Co. No. 1, workers from the Lansford-Coaldale Joint Water Authority, Borough Council members, office workers, and other Borough employees assisted. Materials were also donated by various local businesses.

In all, work to install the equipment took approximately 25 volunteers one day to complete. The lighting system was installed by Thomas L. Hoffman Co., Inc., who coordinated their work effectively with the Borough to meet tight deadlines for opening. Ms. Burrell commended the volunteers and all who assisted for their cooperation and a job well done.

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## BOROUGH OF LANSFORD PLAYGROUNDS

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On July 19, 2007, the Ashton Hill Park was dedicated. In attendance was State Representative Keith McCall who commented, "This is truly a community asset and represents the revitalization of the Lansford community." Also in attendance were John Earl from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Stephen Simchak from the Carbon County Office of Planning and Development, Borough officials, William D. Kee, P.E. from Cowan Associates, and guests.

Reportedly PaDCNR was very pleased with the project and final aesthetic look as it blends into the adjacent surroundings. CAI is very honored to have been asked to provide engineering services for this community effort, and is looking forward to continued service to the Borough of Lansford and the other communities in eastern Pennsylvania and surrounding states.

Kudos to Lansford Borough, all the volunteers, and Ms. Karen Burrell for a wonderful job!



Pictured above at dedication are Robert M. Gaughan, Chairman Parks and Recreation Committee; John F. Earl, DCNR; State Rep. Keith McCall; Margaret Horowski, Park and Recreation Committee; and Karen Burrell, Assistant Borough Secretary

Johann F. Szauner, P.E., presented "Introduction to Forensic Engineering" at the July 2007 National Society of Professional Engineers Conference in Denver. When the technical facts in a legal case become too complex for the court to analyze, Professional Engineers are often called as "Expert Witnesses." Johann introduced the required skills, including investigation procedures, legal doctrines to consider when issuing a report, and how to become qualified as an expert by the courts and present effective testimony. His presentation was videotaped and will be made available through the NSPE web site: [www.nspe.org](http://www.nspe.org). New York State has approved this presentation for continuing education credits under PIE course PS000777. If you would like more information or wish to discuss any aspects of Forensic Engineering, or are in need of an expert witness, contact Johann at [jfs@cowanassociates.com](mailto:jfs@cowanassociates.com).

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Cowan Associates, Inc. is proud to announce that Nicole A. S. Gasda has received her Professional Engineering License in Pennsylvania. Nicole was raised in Coopersburg, PA, and attended Southern Lehigh High School. She received her Bachelors Degree in Civil Engineering in 2002 from the University of Virginia.

Nicole was married this past June to Brian Gasda, who is also a civil engineer and works with Lehigh Engineering Associates. Nicole began her career with Cowan Associates, Inc. in the fall of 2002, and has worked her way from a Designer in our Structural Engineering Department to a Project Engineer doing design work as well as project management. Kudos Nicole!

## WATER ENVIRONMENT FEDERATION COLLECTION SYSTEMS 2008 COMES TO PENNSYLVANIA!

This specialty conference of the Water Environment Federation (WEF) will take place at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh, PA on May 18 – 21, 2008, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Water Environment Association (PWEA). The Collections Systems Committee of the WEF draws on members having experience with sewer systems from across America, and organizes this specialty conference to be held in different regions of the USA. In 2008, Pittsburgh will host this conference with the theme of "Regional Planning for Compliance, The Future with Multi-Jurisdictional Organizations." The topics covered include the regulatory issues regarding Combined Sewer Overflow/Sanitary Sewer Overflow (CSO/SSO) abatement and watershed management, materials and technologies for rehabilitation and construction of wastewater collection systems, prioritization of capital improvement programs (asset management), challenges facing municipalities for financing projects, and operation and maintenance. Operator training credits are provided with many of the sessions. Angelika B. Forndran, P.E., Director of Environmental Engineering, has submitted an abstract on the topic of semi-trenchless technology of sewer sliplining with high density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe. This WEF/PWEA specialty conference forum focuses on collection systems and is a valuable resource for exchange of experience and ideas, as well as hands-on exposure to state-of-the-art products and equipment. Look up the website at [www.wef.org/CollectionSystems](http://www.wef.org/CollectionSystems) for information on registration.

**HUMOR:** A project manager, hardware engineer and software engineer were in a car heading down a hill when the brakes failed. The driver managed to get it stopped by using the gears and a convenient dirt track.

All three jumped out and after peering under the car, the hardware engineer said, "I see what the problem is and with this handy roll of duct tape I think I can fix it good enough to get us to the next town." The project manager quickly interrupted, "No, no, no. Before we do anything we need to decide on a vision for our future, figure out a plan and assign individual deliverables." At which point the software engineer said, "You know what, I think we should push the car back up to the top of the hill and see if it happens again."

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## ADVICE FROM OUR IT CONSULTANT

It is important to make sure that your computer is free of worms and viruses. Even the ones that don't seem to cause damage can be dangerous. They can flood networks with trash, making normal operations difficult and more vulnerable to future attacks. Every computer with a worm infection is broadcasting to the entire Internet that it can be taken over by anyone who cares to copy the method the worm used. Also, some viruses and worms disable standard security measures, or install their own back-door services that allow other people to use your computer over the Net. Not least, worms are always trying to infect other people's computers.

1. Back up your work. No computer is 100% reliable. If there is something on your computer that you need or want to keep, make sure it is backed up by a copy on another machine, or a removable device such as a CD or tape. Email inboxes and Windows desktops are not safe places to keep important files.
2. Keep up-to-date with fixes and security patches. This is more important than ever nowadays. Recent Windows worms have almost all exploited known vulnerabilities. People who kept their computers up-to-date with fixes were safe. Most people didn't, and weren't. Don't assume that home computers are safe – any machine that sends or receives e-mail, or is ever connected to a network even for a few seconds, can be vulnerable.
3. Always use a virus scanner and always remove viruses and worms if you find them. Keep up-to-date with virus detection files.
4. Keep up-to-date. Whenever possible, use recent versions of software, especially Windows and browser software. Newer versions are much safer and more reliable than any of the earlier ones.
5. Always use a personal firewall program and pop-up blocker, and run at least weekly live updates.
6. Never follow web-based prompts to download or install free software, especially if the prompt indicates that you have a virus and need to download free software to eliminate the virus.
7. Don't get caught by spam. A large proportion of email viruses and worms arrive in messages that get trapped by our spam checkers. Avoid opening mail marked as spam. Never pass spam on to your friends and colleagues, and don't get involved in chain letters or circular jokes.
8. Avoid running scripts. Set up mail clients (such as Outlook, Outlook Express, and so on) so they do not run scripts in incoming mail. Avoid "previewing" mail, that is opening a mail item whenever the cursor goes over its entry on the incoming mail list.
9. Be wary of attachments. Only open or run email attachments if you know where they came from and what they are. Never open attachments on spam mail, or mail that seems to come from you but that you don't remember sending.
10. Be careful of web links in email. Avoid opening web links on incoming mail unless you know what they are. Never follow web links or spam, or other mail from people you don't know.

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