Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation invites and welcomes you to the Open House and Dedication of the

Bard Community Center

Fourth Avenue and Washington Streets
Royersford, Pennsylvania 19465

Saturday,
December 2, 1995
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Dedication at 11 a.m.

Learn what the recently renovated facility has to offer and join us for refreshments as you meet representatives from the Royersford Free Public Library, Spring-Ford Historical Society and Project Outreach, all of which operate within the community center.
Program Agenda

Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation
Dedication of the

Bard Community Center

in honor of Agnes C. and Robert L. Bard

Open House: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Dedication Ceremony: 11 a.m.

Invocation
Rev. Lee F. Adams, Jr.
Pastor, Royersford United Methodist Church

Speakers
Genevieve D. Coale, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools, Spring-Ford Area School District
Norman E. Donoghue, II, Esq.
Co-Trustee, Agnes C. and Robert L. Bard Foundation
Ms. Patricia Kling
Assistant Vice President, Mellon Bank/Agnes C. and Robert L. Bard Foundation
Donald Andes
President, Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation

Catherine Krause
Royersford Free Public Library
William McTavish
President, Project Outreach
Carolyn Fetterolf
Spring-Ford Historical Society

Special Thanks to the Women’s Club of Royersford for providing the cookies and to Project Outreach and Spring-Ford Area School District for providing beverages for the dedication and open house.
Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation

The purpose of the Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation is as follows:

A) To secure resources from individuals, corporations, community organizations and foundations to be distributed to support programs for the benefit of the students in the Spring-Ford Area School District, which will lead to the overall improvement of the quality of education and an enhancement of community support for public education.

B) The entity is organized and shall be operated exclusively for educational purposes as defined in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Since its inception, the Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation has operated as a non-profit arm of the school district. With its non-profit status, the Educational Foundation is able to compete for various grant monies and other support for which the school district might not otherwise be eligible.

The first major project of the Educational Foundation was to seek funding for the rehabilitation of the building which is now the Bard Community Center. It obtained that funding from the Agnes C. and Robert L. Bard Foundation. The center is now named in honor of the contribution made possible from the Bard estate.

The Educational Foundation also holds a scholarship reception each year to raise money for three $1,000 scholarships to be awarded to members of the graduating class each year. This year's scholarship reception is scheduled for April 12, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend. Tickets will be available in the Spring for a pre-determined tax-deductible contribution. Interested parties should contact the Spring-Ford Area School District Administrative Offices at (610) 489-1666 ext. 202.

During the 1994-1995 school year, funds from the Bard Foundation also helped the Spring-Ford Educational Foundation offer a series of multi-cultural programs directed toward promoting mutual respect and appreciation of all cultures. The Educational Foundation has again received funding from the Bard Foundation for programs for the community for the 1995-1996 school year.

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Our Gratitude To...

Many other individuals have been instrumental in helping to bring the ideals of the Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation to fruition. Without their help, we could not have accomplished as much as we have. We extend our sincere gratitude to the following people for their foresight, dedication and hard work:

Edwin D. Coyle, Ed.D., former Superintendent, Spring-Ford Area School District;

Bruce Cooper, Supervisor of Maintenance and Operations, Spring-Ford Area School District;

Mrs. Jean Tuscai, Secretary to the Superintendent, Spring-Ford Area School District;

All members of the Property Committee of the Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation.
The Bard Community Center

The Bard Community Center is now home to Project Outreach, the Royersford Free Public Library, and the Spring-Ford Historical Society. The building was once the Royersford Elementary School Fourth Avenue Building, and when renovations to Royersford Elementary were recommended in 1993, the building and Royersford Public Library's 60-plus-year association with the school district were almost lost forever. Thanks to a plea from the Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation to the Bard Foundation for financial assistance to save the building, the history of the building and the library have been preserved for use by the citizens for Spring-Ford.

Bard Foundation Generosity Helps to Rescue a Historical School Building and the Royersford Free Public Library

The "story" of the Royersford Public Library and its historical association with the local school district dates back to 1898. That year, a group of business and professional men established the Library with a $200 contribution from the Andrew Carnegie Fund and $50 from the school board of the Royersford School District. The Library opened in one room of what was then the Adams Elementary School, located at Spring Street and Fourth Avenue in Royersford. (That building no longer exists.)

Needing more space, the Library later moved to Latshaw's Hall--the former Royersford town hall--located at Fourth Avenue and Main Streets. In 1908, the Latshaw family donated the ground at Fourth Avenue and Washington Streets in Royersford Borough to the Library. However, the Royersford School District later requested to use the land for the construction of a new elementary school.

In 1929, the land was deeded over to the Royersford School District (now the Spring-Ford Area School District). With this purchase, the School Board agreed to provide space in the then new Royersford Elementary School and to cover utility costs for the Library--although the district has been under no legal obligation to do so. That arrangement remained intact since the building opened. The Library paid no rent, and among utilities, paid only its own telephone bill.

The Royersford Free Public Library primarily serves the Royersford, Limerick, and Upper Providence communities--all of which are represented on its Board of Directors. It receives approximately half of its funding from these communities. An additional third of its funding comes from the Royersford Community Chest. The Library also serves members in Spring City, Collegeville, Trappe, and other surrounding areas.

The existence of the building and Library were threatened, however, when renovations were recommended for Royersford Elementary School.

In 1990, the district Facilities Committee reported to the Spring-Ford Area School District Board of School Directors that it had found conditions in Royersford Elementary School to be in need of upgrading. At that time, the School Board commissioned an architectural firm that specialized in scholastic facilities planning to examine the Royersford Elementary School facilities and make its recommendations on how to address the elementary school's needs.

By that time, Royersford Elementary School had expanded into three different buildings: the Fourth Avenue Building, a Fifth Avenue Building (constructed in 1957), and relocatable classrooms located on the land between the larger permanent structures. The architectural firm recommended that: 1) The District renovate and expand the Fifth Avenue Building to house all of Royersford Elementary School; 2) The District remove the relocatable classrooms, and 3) The District demolish or sell the Fourth Avenue Building. The School Board agreed to follow these recommendations. The third, however, would leave Royersford Public Library without a home and facing its own financial dilemma.

Faced with other critical facilities needs, the School Board and District could not afford to renovate the Fourth Avenue Building on its own, solely for the use of the Royersford Public Library. In addition, because of its past association with the school district, the Library was not financially capable of renovating the facility, either. It seems that throughout the Library's association with the District, the Library's book collection had been
co-mingled with the Royersford Elementary School library collection. As such, under state regulations, the entire "library facility" had been considered a school library. Therefore, Royersford Public Library had been ineligible for state funding and had relied solely on support by the School District (use of facility and utilities only - no additional funding), past contributions from the Bard Foundation, its supporting communities, and other community services.

Consequently, the Royersford Public Library was not able to seek state funding until the association with the school district was terminated. The Library also was awaiting approval of its application to Access Pennsylvania (a state-wide library card system) and other organizations through which it would be able to seek state funding.

Another complicating circumstance was that the building was not "handicapped accessible" at the time. Therefore, even if the School District were to vacate the building and allow the Public Library to use it, as a public institution, the Public Library would have to make the necessary renovations to comply with federal handicapped access laws. With current budget restraints (and unavailability of state aid), the Royersford Public Library could not make these renovations on its own.

Compounding its troubles, with the departure of Royersford Elementary School, the Public Library needed to replenish its juvenile book collection.

It was then that the Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation was established as a non-profit arm of the school district that could help raise money for special projects via grants and contributions the district might not otherwise be qualified to receive. In conjunction with the Royersford Public Library, and Project Outreach, Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation applied for a nearly $250,000 grant from the Bard Foundation to fund the necessary renovations to the Fourth Avenue Building. It is only with the support of the Bard Foundation that the renovations were made possible. Consequently, the stately structure as well as the Royersford Free Public Library are now able to maintain their historical contributions to the greater Royersford community.

Today, the Bard Community Center is home not only to the Royersford Public Library, but also to Project Outreach and the Spring-Ford Area Historical Society. Operation of the facility is overseen by the Educational Foundation, with occupants leasing space and paying for their utilities and other operating expenses.
Who were Agnes C. and Robert L. Bard?

In the early 1900s, a young man from Reading, named Robert L. Bard married Agnes Cook. Mr. Bard's parents owned Bard Hardware Company, which at the time was the largest retail and wholesale hardware company in Reading and Berks County. It is said that upon their death, Mr. Bard inherited close to a million dollars.

Mr. Bard was a tall, well-built man who always wore a white shirt, black suit, bow tie, and suspenders. He loved professional sports, especially football and the Eagles, and attended most of their home games. Mrs. Bard was very straightlaced and aloof. She usually wore a high collar and pince-nez glasses. She also wrote magazine articles that appeared in Redbook and The New Yorker.

Upon graduation from Harvard, Mr. Bard founded the Bard Manufacturing Company in a loft building on Milk Street in Boston, Massachusetts in 1915. The following year, the company moved to Royersford. Its was first housed in a three-story stone building purchased from Keystone Meter Works. The building was located between First and Second Avenues on Arch Street and next to the Reading Railroad (now Conrail) and overlooked the Schuylkill River. The company manufactured screw machine products, precision steel parts, bushings, and bolts. Its customers included New York Central Railroad, Otis Elevator and Treadway Steel. During World War II, it held several defense contracts, including ones with the U.S. Navy. The company also made mining equipment for use in Africa and South America and shipped products all over the world.

Mr. Bard remained the sole owner of Bard Manufacturing and was both the President and salesman for the company. Every Friday morning, he would travel to New York City to service the New York Transit account and return home in the evening. The company staffed as many as 45 employees during World War II and operated both day and night shifts.

The Bards originally resided on Pine Street on what is now the Beyer Property. In September, 1938 they purchased the property at 838 Walnut Street from Ferdinand Heller.

It is said that both Mr. and Mrs. Bard were strict and rather frugal. Mr. Bard always collected bad debts, and local bills and letters were hand-delivered to save postage costs. Meanwhile, Mrs. Bard allowed repairmen into the home only after they wiped their feet, and carefully scrutinized each item on the repair bill before paying.

Mr. Bard passed away in the 1950s after a battle with cancer. Bard Manufacturing was then sold in 1961 to Harold Miller and William Seal. The following year, the company was moved to Ellis Woods Road in East Coventry Township and is still in operation with six employees there today.

Mrs. Bard, however, survived her husband by nearly 30 years. When she died in 1986, she left the Bard estate to charity. The Bard property on Walnut Street was transferred to Rev. Daniel Sheehan and became the Sacred Heart Church Rectory.

In addition, as Benjamin Franklin said, "A penny saved is a penny earned," and Mr. and Mrs. Bard's perceived frugality in life has made it possible for many local organizations to benefit from the funds they left to charity. Upon Mrs. Bard's death, the Agnes C. and Robert L. Bard Foundation was established to oversee distribution of the funds in the Bard estate. Trustees of the Foundation first examined Mrs. Bard's pattern of giving to determine how the funds should best be allocated to comply with the Bards' intentions. They discovered that most of the couple's charitable donations were made to organizations within the Spring-Ford community, or to larger organizations that served the Spring-Ford community. Thus the trustees determined that Bard Foundation funding should follow the same pattern.

It was through funding from the Agnes C. and Robert L. Bard Foundation made to the Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation that the former Royersford Elementary School Fourth Avenue Building at Fourth Avenue and Washington Street was able to be saved and renovated for use as a community center. In honor of the Bard legacy, this center shall now be known as the Bard Community Center.

**Special thanks to Royersford Mayor Ron Nettles, who supplied us with the biographical information on Robert L. and Agnes Cook Bard.
Tenants of the Bard Community Center

Royersford Free Public Library
200 S. 4th Avenue, Royersford, PA, 19468, (610) 948-7277
Marilyn Duffy - Librarian
Catherine Krause - President
Diane Highlands - Vice President
Ron Nettles - Treasurer
Judi Lien - Secretary

Hours of Operation: MWF & Sat. - 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Mon. through Thurs. - 6-8:30 p.m.

Project Outreach
410 Washington Street, Royersford, PA, 19468, (610) 948-5111
William McTavish - President
Millie Eddleman - Office Manager
Jean Jeffries - Social Services Coordinator

Hours of Operation: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. M-F; answering service available at all other times.

Spring-Ford Area Historical Society Museum and Research Library
200 S. 4th Avenue, Royersford, PA, 19468, (610) 948-7127
Carolyn Fetterolf - Museum Director
Robert Hollenbach - President
Ken Reed - Vice President
Robert Weikel - Treasurer
Anne Tudor - Recording Secretary
Joyce Brunner - Corresponding Secretary

Hours of Operation: first Sunday of each month, 1-3 p.m.; Tues. 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Wed. & Thurs. 1-3 p.m.
Spring-Ford Area School District

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Our Appreciation for Understanding the Vision...

The Spring-Ford Area School District Educational Foundation and tenants of the Bard Community Center extend their sincere appreciation to all of the members of the Spring-Ford Area School District Board of School Directors for understanding the potential and historical value of the former Royersford Elementary School Fourth Avenue Building and for allowing the Educational Foundation and tenants of the facility to seek the funding necessary to help save and renovate the facility as the Bard Community Center.