

Decorations come down prematurely when they are supposed to stay up

By **JIM DINO**
Standard-Speaker

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Decorations from the recent "Paint the Town Red, White and Blue Day" are missing in the city, and presumed discarded.

In an effort to build community spirit, the Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership encouraged residents to display flags, ribbons and flowers on May 22, which was designated as "Paint the Township Red, White and Blue Day."

Now some of those decorations are gone – even though they weren't supposed to be.

Lena Kotansky, the Partnership's executive director, said the decorations were not meant to come down –yet.

"Our intention was that they stay up all summer," Kotansky said. "We wanted to build on it during each of the holidays during the summer, right up to Funfest. The Funfest Committee even changed the colors on their banner to red, white and blue."

Kotansky said she does not know what happened, and isn't sure to what extent the decorations have been removed. But one report was that flags valued at \$25 each were removed and thrown out.

The Partnership devised the idea to show that people can work together and show pride in the community.

Local businesses donated materials to make ribbons, and volunteers made them. They still adorn outdoor doorknobs and other outdoor places around the area. The businesses also donated materials to paint red, white and blue stars on local streets. Boy and Girl Scouts and other groups planted trees.

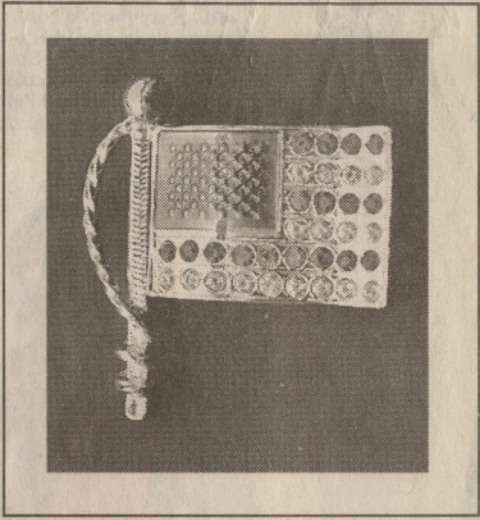
"I don't know what happened," Kotansky said. "I hope the situation is resolved. We wanted to come up with other things to do on the other holidays, so we can build the program."

The Partnership has taken on other projects as well. It is working to develop a scholarship program for students who promise to return to the area after they graduate from their post-secondary education.

Another section of the committee is helping to identify and develop hiking and biking trails along former railroad beds in the area.

The group succeeded with the Mountain Council of Governments in getting a \$90,000 grant to beautify one entrance to Hazleton, Route 924, from South Broad Street to West Broad Street. This is an importance entrance because it comes from Interstate 81.

Paint the Town Red, White and Blue!



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