



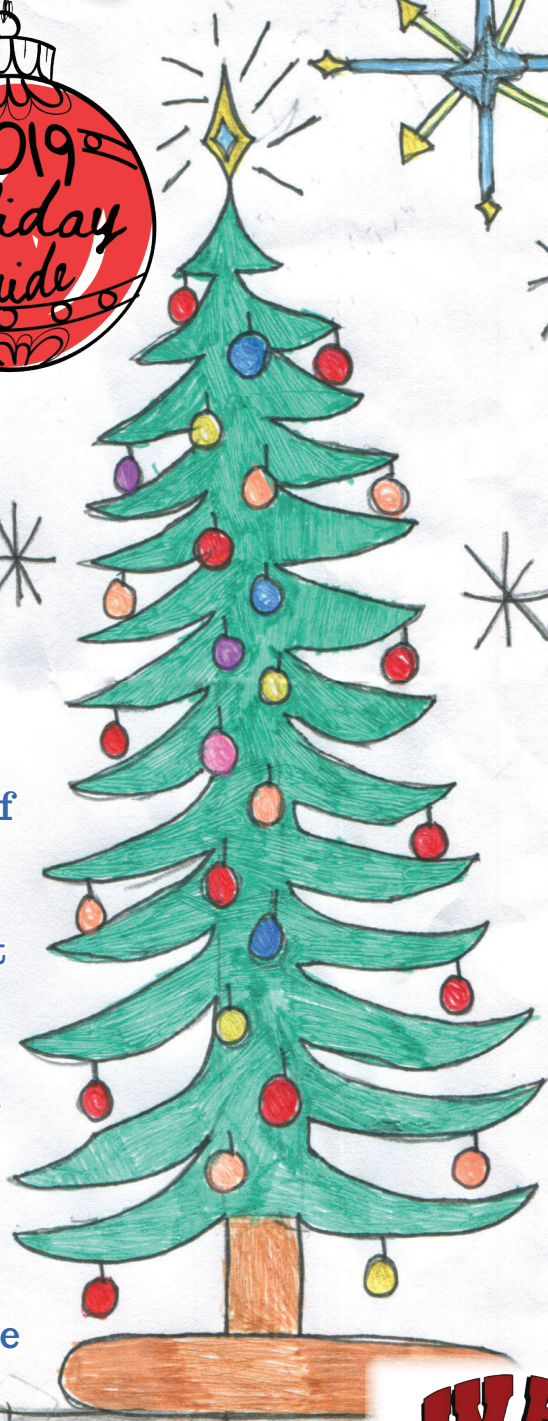
West Allegheny Edition

Allegheny West

Volume 21, Issue 123
December 2019 - January 2020

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West Allegheny
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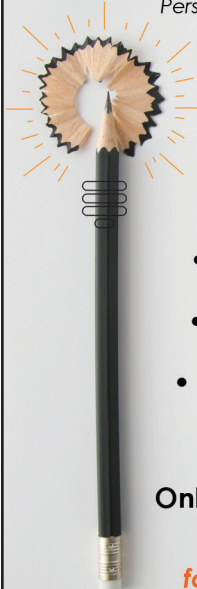
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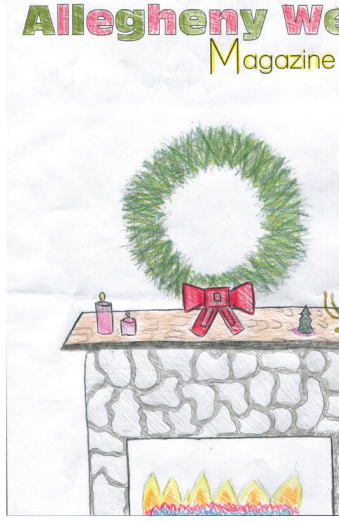
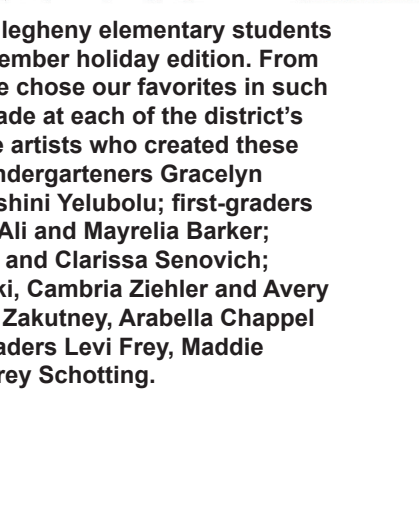
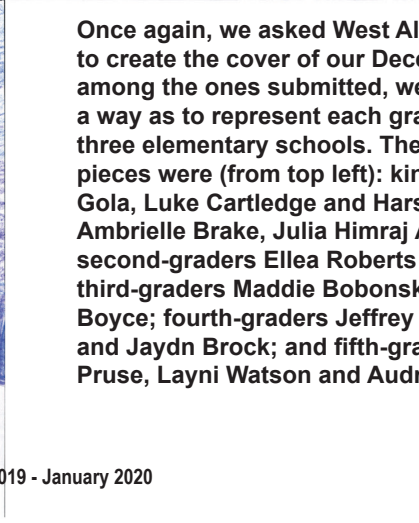
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Once again, we asked West Allegheny elementary students to create the cover of our December holiday edition. From among the ones submitted, we chose our favorites in such a way as to represent each grade at each of the district's three elementary schools. The artists who created these pieces were (from top left): kindergarteners Gracelyn Gola, Luke Cartledge and Harshini Yelubolu; first-graders Ambrielle Brake, Julia Himraj Ali and Mayrelia Barker; second-graders Ellea Roberts and Clarissa Senovich; third-graders Maddie Bobonski, Cambria Ziehler and Avery Boyce; fourth-graders Jeffrey Zakutney, Arabella Chappel and Jaydn Brock; and fifth-graders Levi Frey, Maddie Pruse, Layni Watson and Audrey Schotting.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Cailyn Schmac, a fifth-grader at McKee Elementary School, created this drawing for our holiday coloring contest. We liked Cailyn's strong lines and attention to detail.

From the Publisher

Dear Readers,

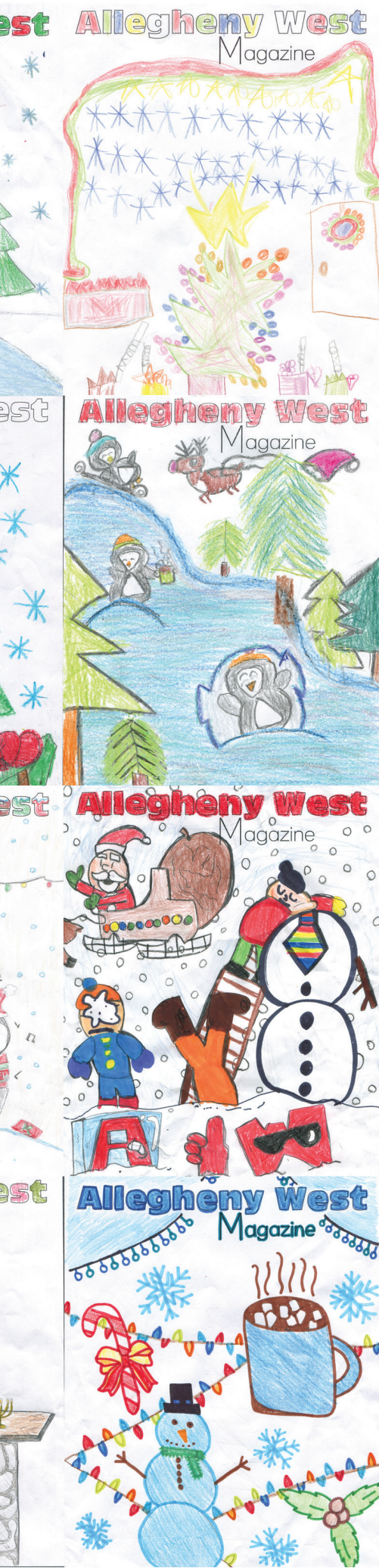
Thank you for picking up our December West Allegheny edition of Allegheny West Magazine. I'd like to start this month's note by once again thanking all of the West Allegheny elementary students who submitted artwork for our annual holiday coloring contest. This was the fifth year that we held this contest and, once again, students did not disappoint. It was again difficult to pick an overall winner. That drawing is on our cover this month. We've printed the runner-ups on this spread.

In this edition as well, we're keeping another tradition going by once again bringing you our annual holiday events guide, which is filled with area holiday-related events and happenings. As we move into the holidays, be sure to keep this guide handy as a reference for area visits with Santa, light-up events and more. If you'd like a mobile version of this guide, download our new events app, AWMag Events. See our cover or page 9 for the QR code.

Be sure to look for our next edition in February. In the meantime, we would like to wish you happy holidays and a healthy New Year!



Doug Hughey,
Publisher/Editor



Cameo of Caring Awardees honored

Heritage Valley Health System recognized its 2019 Cameos of Caring Awardees at the 21st Annual Cameos of Caring Awards Gala on Nov. 2 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. The Cameo of Caring Program & Awards were established in 1999, in keeping with the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing’s commitment to the advancement and promotion of the nursing profession. The Cameos of Caring Award honors exceptional bedside nurses who work in acute care hospitals. Recipients must demonstrate a commitment to consistent, evidenced-based clinical decision-making and excellence in nursing care; serve as an effective advocate for patients and their families; encourage and motivate others, and be recognized as a role model for the profession of nursing; practice nursing involving direct patient care; be a licensed RN; and be a direct employee of the hospital.

This year’s awardees were as follows:

Abbey Inches, RN works as part of the PRN Pool at Heritage Valley Sewickley. As a float nurse, Inches enjoys helping patients who are in the hospital for a variety of reasons. Her goal is to always make patients and their families feel less scared and inspire confidence that they are receiving the highest quality care.



“When I discharge someone home or to rehab because they have reached the set goals, and I get a handshake or a hug, I know I have done what I set out to do,” said Abbey. “That, to me, is the most satisfying.”

Inches is also a member of the Heritage Valley Sewickley Customer Experience Team.

“I feel we can advocate for our profession and get back to the fundamental element of nursing, which is giving the safest and best care to our patients,” added Inches.

Nancy Johnson, RN currently works as a part of the IV Therapy Department at Heritage Valley Beaver. Johnson has grown her career substantially over the past 25 years. She is PICC Line certified and chemotherapy certified. She has also helped develop current guidelines and policies for the hospital. Johnson has used her talents outside of the hospital as a certified respite nurse at Camp Woodlands and a CPR instructor for the Red Cross. Johnson feels the most satisfying part of her job is making a significant difference in people’s lives by coordinating and implementing treatment plans for acute and chronically ill patients.



“Every day there is a special story. I am a nurse and my care changes lives,” said Johnson.

One of her favorite quotes is, “People will forget what you said; they will forget what you did; but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

Christine Duran, RN works on the Acute Rehabilitation Unit at Ohio Valley Hospital. She graduated from the Ohio Valley Hospital School of Nursing in 2015 and, at graduation, was named the recipient of the Ronita DiClemente Nursing Award based upon her strong academic performance, enthusiasm and motivation while completing the program; development of critical thinking and clinical judgment; and professional representation of the hospital and program. The most satisfying part of Duran’s nursing career is seeing patients smile when they are feeling better and knowing they were able to get strong enough to go home safely after being in the unit. She enjoys getting to know patients and their families and develops genuine relationships as she cares for them and helps them through the healing process.



“Heritage Valley is fortunate to have highly skilled and dedicated nurses at all of our locations,” said Linda Homyk, MSN, BSN, RN, vice president and chief nursing officer, Patient Care Services at Heritage Valley Health System. “Abbey, Nancy and Christine are excellent nurses who are committed to patient care and promoting the nursing profession. We’re proud to have them as Cameos of Caring awardees this year.”



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Heritage Valley brings advanced imaging technology to Kennedy Township

Heritage Valley Health System announced the installation of new scanning technology at Heritage Valley Kennedy that combines the advancements in Magnetic Resonance (MR) with the sophisticated engineering of a 1.5T wide-bore system. This new scanner provides an increased level of patient comfort with flexible coil designs and novel applications designed to minimize scan times and improve image quality.

“Heritage Valley is committed to bringing the highest quality care to Heritage Valley Kennedy hospital,” said Norm Mitry, President & CEO, Heritage Valley Health System. “Making an investment in state-of-the-art MRI technology ensures that patients are able to get the testing they need, without having to travel outside of the community.”

This new scanner, the SIGNA™ Voyager from GE Healthcare, was installed at the Heritage Valley Kennedy campus in October and delivers deeper signal penetration and sharper, high-quality images. The design automates patient protocols to help decrease exam times and accommodate more patients per day.

“Not only does the scanner provide high quality images, it also allows us to focus on patient comfort, which is extremely important to us,” said Sandy Bufalini, System Director, Diagnostic Imaging Services. “Patients that receive an MRI at the Kennedy location are offered noise cancelling headphones and are able to listen to a selection of SiriusXM radio options. Undergoing testing can be stressful, so we’re happy to incorporate measures that help the patient feel relaxed.”

The new scanning technology implemented at Heritage Valley Kennedy is consistent with the technology available at Heritage Valley hospitals in Beaver and Sewickley. Additionally, Heritage Valley provides mobile imaging services at its Medical Neighborhoods in Calcutta, Ohio; Robinson Township; Chippewa Township; Ellwood City; and the Heritage Valley Women’s Health Center in Center Township to further provide convenience to patients, without sacrificing quality.

To schedule an MRI at Heritage Valley Kennedy, please contact the diagnostic imaging department at (412) 777-6100. To schedule an MRI at any other Heritage Valley location, call 1 (866) 901-IMAG (4624).



This SIGNA™ Voyager scanner from GE Healthcare was installed at the Heritage Valley Kennedy campus in October.



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LANXESS hosts Rep. Lamb for discussion on local manufacturing

LANXESS Corporation, a specialty chemicals manufacturer with a regional headquarters in Findlay Township, hosted Congressman Conor Lamb for an employee meet-and-greet in October to kickoff National Manufacturing Month.



Rep. Conor Lamb meets with LANXESS senior leadership following a town hall discussion at the company's regional headquarters in Findlay Township.

Lamb met with LANXESS leaders, including President & CEO Antonis Papadourakis, to learn more about the company's operations within the region - including its manufacturing facilities in Neville Island and Burgettstown. LANXESS also operates sites across the U.S.

Speaking to a packed room of LANXESS employees, Lamb addressed several items happening in Washington, D.C. that could affect the manufacturing industry, such as proposed tariffs, regulations and trade war discussions. His remarks centered around the importance of innovating locally and manufacturing domestically, including within the region. He also commended the company for its efforts toward sustainability and helping to prepare the industry's future workforce. That item in particular was relevant, given that just a year prior LANXESS and other companies across the country partnered with schools and students of all ages to highlight the vast opportunities in high-tech manufacturing.

Lamb then generously spent time fielding questions from employees - many of whom live within his representative district - that touched on topics like regional infrastructure and healthcare legislation.

LANXESS is a global company with over 15,000 employees and is based in Cologne, Germany. The company earned \$8.1 billion in revenue in 2018 and operates 60 sites in 33 countries. The company employs more than 300 people in Western Pennsylvania

Enrollment open for CCAC's tuition-free program in plastics

CCAC West Hills Center is now recruiting its second group of students for its plastics manufacturing technology program, which trains students for careers in the plastics industry. The program's spring semester starts Jan. 28 and interested individuals can apply for a scholarship up until Dec. 20 that covers the entire cost of tuition, fees, books and materials.

The plastics industry creates a wide array of consumer products, ranging from automotive parts to electronic components. Jobs in the industry offer family-sustaining wages and are the catalyst for a rewarding, life-long career. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average annual earnings for production workers in the plastics industry ranged from \$35,700 to \$58,000.

All classes are held in the evening at the CCAC West Hills Center in Oakdale. For more information, contact Pam Grove at (412) 788-7534 or pgrove@ccac.edu. Applications are being accepted until Dec. 20 for classes that start in January of 2020.



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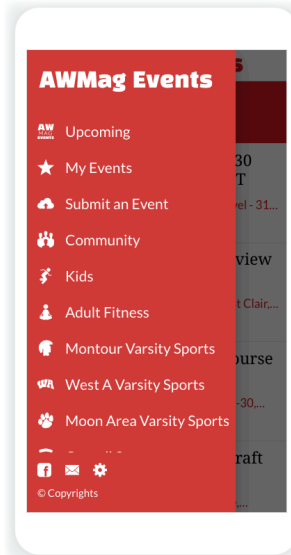


Leslie Burns, D.C.

Allegheny West Magazine releases new app dedicated to local events

Allegheny West Magazine has released a new mobile app dedicated to local events in western Allegheny County. The app, called AWMag Events, gives users the ability to easily browse through area kid-friendly community events, adult fitness classes, varsity sports schedules, health and wellness programs, library programming, and more. Using the app's various functions, users can either get a quick overview of what's coming up soon or delve deeper into a number of different categories to plan out the months ahead. Events are constantly updated and can be seamlessly saved to a personal calendar right on a mobile device. Users are also invited to submit events to be considered for inclusion.

The AWMag Events app is available on the Apple App Store and on Google Play. To download, simply scan the QR code on the cover or search on the stores. Feel free to send your feedback, too, as Allegheny West Magazine will be improving and expanding on the app's functions in the future.



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North Fayette hires new manager

North Fayette Township has hired a new manager. Mike Baker took over duties on Oct. 1. Prior to coming to North Fayette, Baker was the commissioner of Indiana County and had served as chairman of the county's board since 2016. Prior to that, he served two terms as Indiana County coroner and 22 years as the chief deputy coroner.



Mike Baker
PHOTO BY DOUG HUGHEY

Baker is a graduate of Blairsville High School and holds an associate's degree in computer network management, a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration and master's degrees in employment and labor relations and forensic science. He served as vice chairman of the Technology Committee of the County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania and was recently appointed to the association's Emergency Medical Services Taskforce. He is a former division supervisor for Citizens' Ambulance Service and was a Helicopter Flight Paramedic with STAT MedEvac of Pittsburgh.

Baker is the vice chairman of the Governing Board of Directors of the Center for Organ Recovery & Education - also known as CORE - in Pittsburgh and is past chairman of CORE's Community Outreach & Professional Services Committee. He has also served as a member of the executive board of directors of the Indiana County Public Safety Academy.

Baker and his wife, Karen, have four children and four grandchildren.

Steubenville Pike Auto to donate car in December, asking for nominations

On Dec. 12, Steubenville Pike Auto in Robinson Township will once again give away a refurbished, pre-owned vehicle to a local individual or family in need.

Giving back is a key value at Steubenville Pike Auto and, after many great years in business, they are continuing to share their blessings through the charity. The donated vehicle is one that Steubenville Pike Auto has serviced by installing new tires and brakes, replacing fluids, updating the Pennsylvania state inspection and emissions test, and detailing to like-new condition. This will be the second car that the charity has donated this year and the eighth car it has donated since starting the program.



Steubenville Pike Auto Repair Charity will be accepting nominations for an individual or family deserving of this opportunity through Dec. 6. The ideal nominee is somebody who thinks of others before themselves, is in need of a vehicle and resides in the local area. As with its previous car donations, Heroes Supporting Heroes will once again be cover Pennsylvania state transfer fees.

Nominations can be made at steubenvillepikeauto.com by clicking on the SPARC logo (pictured at right). Nominations can also be emailed to jason@steubenvillepike.com. All nominations must be received by Dec. 6. An independent group of trusted community members will review nominations. The recipient must have a current Pennsylvania driver's license and be able to obtain vehicle insurance.

Nominations must include the name, address, phone number and email of both the nominee and nominating person, along with a statement explaining why the individual or family nominated needs and deserves a vehicle.

Steubenville Pike Auto Repair Charity looks forward to seeing the nominees and Steubenville Pike Auto is available to service all vehicle needs. To set up an appointment, call (412) 787-9800.

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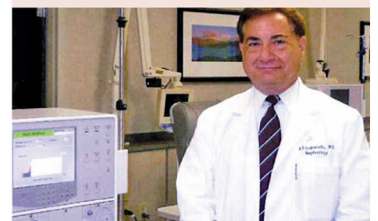
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Class of 1969 celebrates 50th reunion

The West Allegheny Class of 1969 celebrated its 50th reunion at the Pittsburgh Hyatt Airport on Oct. 5. Those in attendance were: (first row kneeling) Kathy (Neely) Stark, Karen (Mowry) Cain, Debbie (Clark) Burton, Terri (Kirk) Watson, (second row sitting) Kathy (Roedler) Spangler, Denise (Sabaton) Geramita, Bonnie (Hlavey) Solomon, Joy (McConnell) Messner, Linda (Scarfone) Asti, Carol (Mudrick) Lowry, Cathy (Lewis) Orel, Diane Ponticel, Nadine (Fobes) Bitts, Susan (Mitchell) Macek, Kathy (Leo) Nonclerg, (third row) Harold Cain, Ron Solomon, Anthony Zupancic, Martha (White) Hunkele, Terry (Lynch) Diday, Mary Kaye (Gorczyca) Kropf, Billie Anne (Auten) Nestor, Gwen (Decker) Homitz, Linda Lewis, Linda (Tobias) Polaski, Michele Borkoski, Sharon (Beaumont) Snyder, Lucia (Mackey) Arnett (fourth row) Chuck Lutz, Dave Plance, Doug Lowry, Chuck Simon, Doug Pritchett, Mike Franchek, Chuck Oravetz, Louie Armstrong, Tom Magadalene, Frank Stuckwish, Larry Robb, Tom Walk, Joe Willy, Bill Beaumont, Frank Palas, Keith Hughes, George Beck, John Lundeen, Dennis Rapp, DeWayne Warman, John Malinosky, Jim Willy and Dan Hanczar. Missing from photo but in attendance was Jacob Junker.



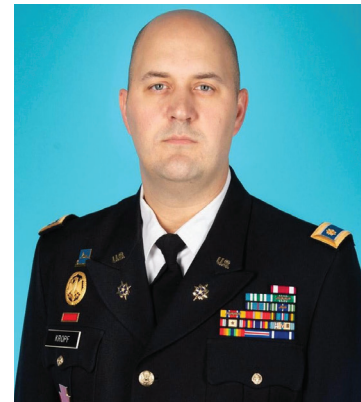
WA alum promoted to lieutenant colonel

West Allegheny alumnus Kevin Kropf was recently promoted to lieutenant colonel in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard. Kropf has served in the military since 1996, the year after he graduated from high school. He enlisted as an intelligence analyst at Fort Huachuca, Arizona in 1996. In 2001, he attended officer candidate school and accepted a commission as a military intelligence officer. He served in two deployments in support of Operation Joint Forge and then Operation Iraqi Freedom. Following his second deployment, he attended the captain's career course and was promoted to major in 2013.

Kropf holds a bachelor of arts in communications and rhetoric from the University of Pittsburgh and a master's in management and leadership from Webster University. He completed command and general staff college and the advanced operations course.

He attended the military intelligence officer basic course and both the signal and military intelligence officer advanced course. He also completed the force management functional area course. Kropf now lives in Annandale, Virginia and works at the Pentagon. In recognition of his promotion, Kropf was awarded a certificate of recognition from state Sen. Pam Iovino's office.

Kropf and his wife, Kimberly, have three sons. His parents, Keith and Mary Kaye, reside in Imperial.



Lt. Col. Kevin Kropf



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WA Hall of Fame unveils plaques, 2019 inductees honored

STORY SUBMITTED
PHOTOS BY DOUG HUGHEY



The West Allegheny Athletic Hall of Fame unveiled this new display at Joe P. DiMichela Stadium for West Allegheny's final game of the year.

West Allegheny School District honored the latest inductees into the West Allegheny Athletic Hall of Fame on Oct. 25 just prior to the West Allegheny football team's final game of the regular season against Moon Area. This was the hall of fame's eighth class of inductees.

Recognized during the pre-game ceremonies at Joe P. DiMichela Stadium were George Kehm, a philanthropic supporter of local youth sports programs for over 60 years; Bill Gamble, known affectionately as the "Voice of the Indians" for having announced 300+ games; and Vicki Hatton, who represented the 1995, 1998 and 1999 girls' WPIAL champion cross-country teams. Amy Palko, another inductee who led West Allegheny's 2006 volleyball team to a state championship win, was in Europe and unable to attend.

For the first time, football fans entering Joe P. DiMichela Stadium that evening could also see a series of plaques that were recently installed to honor each West Allegheny Athletic Hall of Fame class. The plaques are located near the entrance of the stadium and list, by class, each individual and team inducted into the hall of fame. Through a number of efforts, including an annual induction banquet, the West Allegheny Athletic Hall of Fame committee raises money to support West Allegheny athletic programs. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the hall of fame committee is currently asking for nominations for its class of 2020. Nominations can be made at www.westahalloffame.org. To be considered for the 2020 induction class, nominations must be made by Feb 28.

Past inductees and their biographies are also listed by class year on the website.

Honored during pre-game ceremonies were Bill Gamble (at left) and George Kehm (at right). Vicki Hatton (center) represented the 1995, 1998 and 1999 girls' WPIAL champion cross-country teams.



St. Clair hospital earns 15th consecutive 'A' hospital safety grade

The Leapfrog Group, a national nonprofit health care ratings organization, released its new Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades for fall of 2019 and has awarded St. Clair Hospital an "A" for its commitment to keeping patients safe and meeting the highest safety standards in the U.S. St. Clair Hospital's A grade is the hospital's 15th consecutive A, placing it amongst the top hospitals in the country as a leader in the region for patient safety. The Safety Grade assigns letter grades of A, B, C, D and F to hospitals nationwide based on their performance in preventing medical errors, infections and other harms.

Developed under the guidance of a Blue Ribbon National Expert Panel, the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade uses 27 measures of publicly available hospital safety data to assign A, B, C, D and F grades to more than 2,600 U.S. hospitals twice per year. It is calculated by top patient safety experts. It is peer-reviewed, fully transparent and free to the public.



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Clearview delivers 20 Thanksgiving dinners to local food pantries

Clearview Federal Credit Union employees pitched in to assist nine different area food banks just before Thanksgiving this past November.

In all, employees from 10 different branches and several departments from its home office in Moon Township donated enough non-perishables to assemble 20 food baskets for the food banks. Each basket also included a \$20 gift card to help recipients purchase a turkey for Thanksgiving.

Clearview employees even decorated the large baskets and hand-delivered them a couple of weeks before the holidays. Among the recipients of the donations was the West Allegheny Food Pantry, which got a basket from Clearview's relationship development department.

"We truly appreciate the support of members of our community and local businesses," says pantry co-director Linda Stoner. "We rely solely on donations to keep the doors of the pantry open and every contribution helps us do just that."

Approximately 200 local families rely on the West Allegheny Food Pantry's food distributions each month. For distribution times, call (724) 695-1305. Monetary donations can be mailed to PO Box 527, Imperial, PA 15126 and the pantry accepts nonperishables during its distribution hours.



Clearview employees donated goods for Thanksgiving baskets and then delivered them to area food banks. Here, several Clearview volunteers are pictured with basket recipients at the West Hills Food Bank. Clearview also donated to the West Allegheny Food Pantry.

SNPJ hosts first responders for special event

SNPJ Lodge 106 hosted local first responders for a special event at its clubroom Nov. 15. The event gave club members the opportunity to show their appreciation to first responders charged with protecting the safety of those in the local community.

In all, first responders from about a dozen different local departments were invited. Those who attended included local EMTs, police officers, fire fighters and officials. Don's Pizza and Chick-fil-A both donated food and the lodge served up free drinks to anyone off duty.

John Tuite, a SNPJ Lodge 106 board member, says that this was the first time that the club had ever hosted such an event. Though laws prohibit it from opening its doors to the general public, it can do so for special pre-planned events. Tuite, who also organized the event, says he's been struck by the thoughtfulness of local first responders ever since he moved to the area in 1992.

This isn't the only effort that the SNPJ lodge has undertaken to give back. On Veterans Day, it provided free food and drinks to veterans. It also regularly hosts children's events and other special programs. As well, it is currently serving as a drop-off point for the Marine Toys for Tots Program and donating to the Shop With a Cop program and local fire departments.

Once again this year, Tuite will be bartending on Thanksgiving and Christmas, and donating his tips to a good cause.

For more on SNPJ Lodge 106, visit www.snppjimperialpa.com. To view upcoming events, click on the appropriate tab or download the AWMag Events app.



ABOVE: SNPJ Lodge 106 hosted first responders and local officials for a special event to show the club's appreciation Nov. 15. Pictured are Lt. John Walls, Magisterial District Judge Anthony Saveikis, SNPJ Lodge 106 board member Kevin Richards, officer Mike Zacios, dispatcher Leo Olshinsky, Cpl. Don Cokus, Lt. Mike Hamm, SNPJ Lodge 106 board member John Tuite and North Fayette supervisor Bob Doddato. BELOW: Tuite and Richards are pictured with North Fayette Township supervisor JR Mangan, SNPJ board member Stan Repos and North Fayette police Chief Mark O'Donnell.



STORY AND PHOTOS
SUBMITTED

Local studio leading new trend in permanent makeup

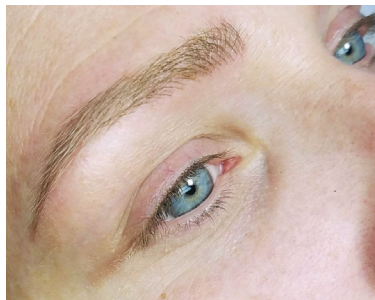
Any woman who wears eye makeup on a daily basis is familiar with the investment involved with wearing it.

Not only is there the time spent applying it, but also the money, as products that won't run or irritate the sensitive skin around the eyes aren't cheap.

That's why, increasingly, women are turning to permanent forms of eye makeup that only require an application about once per year or less. Technically, permanent makeup is a form of tattooing, but unlike traditional, permanent tattoos, the inks used in permanent cosmetic tattoos are formulated to fade out over time.



Luxe Ink utilizes microblading and powder brow, which are forms of permanent cosmetic tattooing. The former is used to fill in eyebrows and the latter to create permanent eye shadow.



While makeup companies aren't happy about the trend, women, and especially those who are on the go, are. Not only does it cut down on the time needed to get ready, but it's also less maintenance to remove and healthier for the skin, since permanent makeup doesn't clog pores or expose skin to irritants.

Because the makeup sits just below the skin, permanent makeup also allows women to look their best, even in conditions that are unfriendly to most forms of makeup.

For the past five years, Jessica Piveronas of South Fayette Township has been helping her clients look their best by using permanent cosmetic techniques. At her studio, Luxe Ink, in Oakdale, she uses cosmetic tattooing

techniques to achieve a number of different effects. She can use microblading to fill in eyebrows and a technique known as powder brow. Another popular service is permanent eyeliner.

Each application lasts anywhere from a year to two years, or even longer.

Jessica says she got her start in the industry about six years ago with wedding makeup. She then got her esthetician license in 2015 before going on to become certified as a permanent makeup artist. Now, she holds eight certifications in the discipline and is an instructor for other permanent makeup artists. She also travels the country, staying up to date on her profession and the latest techniques being used in the industry.

She says she finds the work to be incredibly rewarding. "It's my passion," she says. "I believe that everybody deserves to feel great about the way they look."

Jessica is also able to remove existing permanent makeup done by other artists and she can remove small tattoos without the use of lasers.

In addition, she does lip tint and lash lifts.

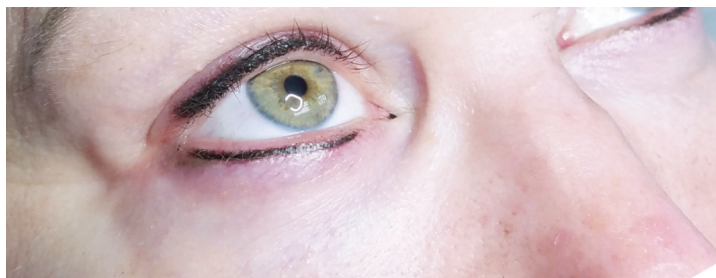
Jessica also offers private, one-on-one permanent makeup certification classes ranging from beginner to advanced. Those interested should contact her by email at jessica@luxinkpmu.com.

Jessica sees clients by appointment at her studio, located above Clarkin Chiropractic, at 112 Union Avenue. Email her at jessica@luxinkpmu.com or call her at (412) 735-2578.

To see more of her work, visit www.luxeinkpmu.com or find her on Instagram and Facebook.



Jessica Piveronas



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BY MICHELE P. CONTI

What an elder law attorney can do for you

I'm sure you've heard the phrase "elder law" before and you may have even met an elder law attorney, but do you know what it actually means to be an elder law attorney?

I'm often asked if, as an elder law attorney, I only work with elderly people. The truth of the matter is that I assist not only those in their days of winter, but also their families in their comprehensive plan to do many things. These include qualifying for governmental benefits like Medicaid or veterans benefits, avoiding probate, sheltering assets from taxes or long term care costs, and guaranteeing that if one spouse needs care that the at-home spouse will be able to afford to live.



However, not every "elder law attorney" is created equal. If an attorney holds themselves out to be a master of all - run! You do not want to hire a jack of all trades when dealing with something as important as your legal long-term status and well-being. Just like most doctors have specialties, the same is true of attorneys. If I needed brain surgery, I wouldn't hire a podiatrist. The same holds true for those who specialize in elder law.

A woman contacted me after hiring an attorney who guaranteed that he could restructure her and her husband's estate so that her husband could immediately qualify for governmental benefits. Unfortunately, this attorney didn't have much experience with the devastating consequences of gifting and tax implications, or the state rules surrounding such programs. Therefore, not only did the couple violate their local rules, but the husband was ultimately disqualified and denied nursing coverage.

Rather than try to fix another's mistakes, however, I would rather educate the baby boomer population about pre-planning, which is key. My job is to counsel clients and their families around the legal aspects of health and long-term care planning, including Medicaid, estate planning, nursing home issues and patients' rights, public benefits, veterans' benefits, Medicare and Social Security claims and appeals, disability planning (including use of durable powers of attorneys and livings wills), legal capacity, probate and the conservation of estates, and the potential tax consequences of their actions. What are your goals? Unless we are proactive and put a strategy in place, you may end up spending the legacy you'd intended to transfer to your next generation.

How do you discern a good elder law attorney from a not-so-good one? The answer is simple: meet them. Ask how much experience they have in this area. Evaluate their bed-side manner. If their customer service is lacking, do you really want to be

married to them during this process? Understand that most elder law issues take time, so make sure that you grasp their fee structure and all that it includes. Also, check their credentials. The Pennsylvania Bar Association website has all actively practicing attorneys' information for your review.

More importantly, a proper elder law attorney should be aware of the ever-changing rules surrounding governmental benefits, Social Security and the tax code. They are not a financial planner. What makes an elder law attorney stand out is recognizing that their clients' needs go beyond the conventional tools of the legal system. The clients' real need is for an all-encompassing, comprehensive plan that will provide not only for their physical requirements, but their financial ones, as well.

For more information on how Conti Law can assist you with your comprehensive plan, call today for a consultation.



Michele P. Conti is an estate planning and elder law attorney. Conti attended Allegheny College in Meadville, Oxford University and Duquesne University School of Law. She received her LL.M. in taxation from Villanova University. She can be reached at (724) 784-0239 or michele@contilawpgh.com.



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SUBMITTED BY MIA A. KOVACS,
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Planning out your RMD

In a financial planning office, the end of the year brings a lot of last-minute RMDs, which stands for required minimum distribution. I find that RMD requirements often sneak up on individuals right before they are affected.

An RMD is the amount that you are required to distribute annually from your IRA or company plan once you turn age 70-and-a-half. “Whose rule is this?” you might ask. Well, the IRS says you have to take an annual RMD and pay taxes on a portion of the funds that you have accumulated and heretofore avoided paying taxes on thus far. Since the IRS takes itself and taxes very seriously, if you do not take your RMD, you will receive a fine. That fine is 50 percent of the required minimum distribution that you neglected to distribute, so skipping out on your annual RMD is not a good idea.



Your RMD is calculated by taking the value of your IRA or company plan as of Dec. 31 and dividing that value by the IRS’ life expectancy factor associated with your age. Once you turn 70-and-a-half, you have until April 1 of the following year to take your first RMD. Every year after that, you are required to distribute your annual RMD by Dec. 31. Just because the IRS gives you that extra time for your first RMD does not mean you should necessarily take it. Your RMD is added to your taxable

income and, if you delay your RMD at 70-and-a-half into the next calendar year, that amount plus the next calendar year’s RMD gets added to your taxable income. Two RMDs in one year could bump you up into the next tax bracket. However, taking two RMDs in one tax year may make sense if your income is high in the year you turn 70-and-a-half but you anticipate it will go down drastically the following year.



Mia A. Kovacs

You will also need to consider a strategy if you have multiple IRAs or company plans. The IRS says you can take multiple IRA RMDs from just one IRA. However, you cannot aggregate the RMD from your company plan with other company plans or with your IRA RMD. Therefore, you may want to consider consolidating some of these assets, especially if you want to take monthly income from your IRAs or company plans in order to both supplement your income and satisfy your RMD.

As you can see, there are a variety of planning scenarios and a Certified Financial Planner, such as myself, can help you determine your best option.

Mia A. Kovacs, CFP®, is a vice president and a financial consultant with Bill Few Associates. She can be reached at (412) 630-6041 or at mkovacs@billfew.com.



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Touring our area's tech sector

With the rise of automation and a constantly evolving tech landscape, Pittsburgh and the surrounding region have recently gained attention and acclaim as one of the nation's fastest growing ecosystems of research, technology and innovation. Serving as chair of the House Economic Development Subcommittee, I invited several of my colleagues from the House



Commerce Committee who came from all over the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to see firsthand what our region is made of! Our tour began at the Dick's Sporting Goods headquarters located in Findlay Township, where my colleagues and I hosted a roundtable discussion with several Pittsburgh Tech Council members, including Lucas Systems, Duolingo, ARGO A.I., I.Q. Inc., Tech Elevator and Academy Pittsburgh, just to name a few. Committee members also had the chance to tour cutting-edge autonomous vehicle manufacturer Aurora, Carnegie Mellon University, advanced robotics manufacturer Carnegie Robotics, and corporate research and development center Mill 19. The innovation does not end there. Neighborhood 91, a groundbreaking, 200-acre additive manufacturing community, is coming to the Pittsburgh Airport Innovation Campus near Pittsburgh International Airport.



The House Commerce Committee tours Aurora (top), an autonomous vehicle manufacturer and Mill 19 (bottom), a corporate research and development center. Both are located in Pittsburgh.

Over the course of the day, business owners shared their success stories, but they also explained some of the challenges they face. Burgeoning industries like advanced robotics and self-driving automobiles have no shortage of demand for their products. Rather, the most difficult task these businesses have is finding enough qualified job candidates to hire. In such a job climate, skilled workers, like software engineers and other STEM personnel, are in high demand.

Undoubtedly, businesses like the ones we toured would benefit greatly from a larger pool of applicants who possess the technical skills necessary to succeed on the job. Similarly, current and future students would benefit from more focused, hands-on training that gives them the tools to thrive in these growing industries.

Fortunately, we in the House are looking at encouraging new pathways to good careers with a greater focus on providing students with job skills before they leave high school. Solutions addressed in the House earlier this year included growing our career and technical education - or CTE - programs, establishing partnerships between education centers and businesses, creating apprenticeships intended to help companies grow, and developing a world-class workforce that will lead to the next generation of great companies and employees calling Pennsylvania home.

I am honored to represent such a hard-working district in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and welcome all thoughts and suggestions to help make it the best place to work, live and play.

State Rep. Valerie Gaydos is a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, serving the people of the 44th Legislative District.



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WA grad recognized by Bethany College for advancing the game of golf worldwide

Janeen Driscoll, a 1988 graduate of West Allegheny High School, was added to Bethany College's Communications and Media Arts Wall of Fame at a Sept. 27 induction ceremony held at the liberal arts school in West Virginia.

Driscoll graduated from Bethany in 1992 and is currently the director of communication and community affairs for the U.S. Golf Association, a governing body that conducts national championships and administers the defining rules of the game of golf worldwide.

Bethany's wall of fame was established in 2010 to honor distinguished communications graduates. Among the 38 honored alumni are Dave Sims, play-by-play commentator for the Seattle Mariners; and former "CBS Morning News" anchor Faith Daniels.

In her role with the USGA, Driscoll strives to dispel common misconceptions about the game of golf. As a teenager growing up in Clinton, she held some of those misconceptions herself. Having yet to have been exposed to golf, Driscoll believed the (now closed) Marada Golf Course on Route 30 to be a private venue - and likely an expensive one reserved only for members.

Marada, however, was not private. It was a public course and she describes it as "a model of what golf courses in America should be." Instead, it was her own misconception about the sport that influenced her opinion of it. Driscoll says that since entering the game of golf, she has been "a champion" for courses like Marada, saying "they are community assets from which everyone can benefit."

Driscoll works to promote awareness of how affordable and accessible golf can be, citing that nearly 75 percent of all courses in America are public and that the average \$37 cost of a round of golf is roughly the cost of a nice dinner at any common restaurant.

Courses like the Bob O'Connor public golf course in Schenley Park - one of Driscoll's favorites in the Pittsburgh area - has a tee time of \$16.

Another misperception surrounding golf, stated Driscoll, is that the younger generation is not interested in playing. She reported that millions of millennials enter the game each year and expressed excitement about new non-traditional venues that are enticing them, such as the Topgolf complex in Bridgeville.

As the amount of time required to play a regular course is a primary barrier to golfing, Driscoll said that venues that combine food, music and watching sports with fun and engaging golf activities are great for introducing people to the sport.

Driscoll also reported that women comprise the fastest and most consistent growth sector in golf, a trend she finds very exciting. Driscoll believes that women play golf for different reasons than men and that they are more interested in the camaraderie

than competition. Knowing that allows courses to tap into customer preferences and create better experiences. Specialty events such as nine-and-wine outings are attracting more women to the game.

Driscoll acknowledged the tremendous impact that professional golfer Tiger Woods had on the entire sport. Though not a math person, she loves statistics and said that the numbers clearly show the opening of hundreds of new golf courses in direct proportion to Woods' rise and an unfortunate decline in the sport as he fell out of favor with the public.

Woods' historic comeback win at last year's Masters tournament was as special for Driscoll as it was for the millions of golf fans who watched it.

"When Tiger plays well the entire game of golf benefits," she said, adding that "it also shows that you can play golf beyond your 20s and still be competitive."

Driscoll's love for golf developed when she chose to walk away from corporate communications in engineering firms to take a public relations position for the renowned Pinehurst Golf Resort in North Carolina. She later worked for Billy Casper Golf/Buffalo Communications.

During her tenure with the USGA, Driscoll has elevated the brand of golf's national championships, built advocacy programs with golf's leading organizations, and directed more than \$1.5 million in grant deployment and co-op program management to support a healthier future for the game.

Driscoll resides in Basking Ridge, New Jersey with her husband, Patrick McKee, and their two high-school-aged daughters. She praised Bethany College as a stellar communications college that offers numerous cutting-edge learning experiences that helped her establish her career.

Driscoll's parents, Mary and David Driscoll, still live in the family home in Clinton and were able to attend the ceremony at Bethany. Driscoll attributes her success in life to the support and guidance they provided, adding that one of her main goals in life was to make her parents proud.



Janeen Driscoll (at center) is pictured with her parents, Dave and Mary Driscoll, and husband, Patrick McKee, in front of Bethany College's Communications and Media Arts Wall of Fame. Janeen is pictured holding the photo of her that is now on that wall. PHOTO SUBMITTED



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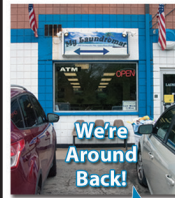
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STORY BY JILL BORDO
PHOTO BY DOUG HUGHEY

WA's Gerst makes history on football team

For the first time in its storied and accomplished history, the West Allegheny High School varsity football team had a female player on the roster this past season.

Junior Breana Gerst performed on the JV team last year, but this year she suited up as the starting point-after-touchdown kicker for the varsity team. She made 19 extra points for the team, scoring on all of her attempts except for two kicks that were blocked.

Prior to joining the football team, Gerst played every position for the school soccer team, an experience she said was helpful in transitioning to the gridiron.

Referred to as "quiet, shy and humble" by both her mother and coaches, Gerst wanted to pursue football but never had the confidence to talk to the coaches. After getting to know former head coach Bob Palko when she took one of his classes, she finally gained the nerve to make the request.

Gerst began kicking with last year's extra-point maker John McArdle and special teams coach Jeff Martin, who specifically develops kicking and punting plans for the team. As McArdle graduated last spring, Gerst moved into the starting position for the 2019 season.

Though she was limited to kicking extra points this year, Gerst's goal is to also train for the positions of kickoff and field goal kicker. As part of the preparation for making kick-offs, Gerst said she will learn to tackle.

"It is every coach's responsibility to teach the proper mechanics of tackling and she will be taught this again next year," said Martin, adding that "our only concern is her safety. If she can protect herself and is the best person for us next year, then she will do it."

Both Martin and head coach Chris Lucas praised Gerst as having a "tremendous work ethic," team mindset, and great personality. Lucas commented that Gerst worked out with the team every day, even in the summer.

Martin, who also runs the Pittsburgh training division for the national organization Kohl's Kicking Camps, said most of Gerst's training is built from this program.

Both coaches said they consider Gerst to be just another player and that they treat her no differently than anyone else on the team. Gerst echoed that sentiment. However, she lamented that her male teammates also sometimes "treat me like I can't take a hit."

The most exciting moment of her season, said Gerst, was West Allegheny's overtime win against Woodland Hills on Sept. 27. With the score tied at 14-14 at the end of regulation, Woodland Hills got the ball first in overtime and scored, but the extra point was blocked. The Indians scored a touchdown shortly thereafter, which set Gerst up to kick the game-winning extra point. Just as she had all season, she knocked it right through the uprights.

"Everyone ran out onto the field after I scored," said Gerst of the memorable win.

Gerst's mother, Monica, mentioned the tremendous pride her family has for Breana, saying that her daughter spent long hours practicing at the school and has enjoyed developing a bond with the team.

When asked if she worries about Breana getting hurt, Monica replied that she doesn't, stating that her daughter "can hold her own out there. Last year, she got tackled in a varsity game against North Allegheny and bounced back up."

Besides learning to tackle, Martin's only hope for Gerst's senior season is that the confidence and familiarity she gained this year will allow her to be more aggressive and attack with added assertiveness.

"She is a very good high school kicker who should get even better with time," stated Martin, adding "she gave 100 percent every time she stepped on the field."

Gerst hopes to continue her football kicking career in college.



Breana Gerst (at left) is pictured with special teams coach Jeff Martin and kicker Gavin Chappel.

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Robinson Township Christian School

RTCS starts new preschool program

Robinson Township Christian School started a 3-year-old preschool program at the start of the fall season. The program, which is geared toward the youngest learners, is led by Kara-Mia Appleton, a teacher who is energetic, loving, fun, hardworking, creative and loyal.

Appleton studied Spanish and education at Gustavus Adolphus College and Crown College. She has been a homeschooling mom to her two daughters and has taught math and grammar at Veritas Classical School. Spanish is her second language. Appleton and her family came to Robinson Township Christian School from Georgia. She is passionate about tailoring the curriculum to the unique and individual needs of 3-year-olds.

“Children, at this age, all learn through different experiences,” says Appleton.

Her students have been learning the basics - including early math, science, letters, numbers and colors - but also so much more. They have been learning how to be good friends and neighbors while also learning Bible stories. Appleton’s goal is that students learn valuable social skills in a God-centered and nourishing environment that lays the foundation for success in kindergarten and beyond.

A day in 3-year-old preschool is never exactly the same, just as no two children are exactly the same. Some days, the students sing, take nature walks or paint outdoors. Activities keep school fun and interesting for children while ensuring that a foundation is being laid for proper social and cognitive skills. Appleton keeps the emotional and spiritual health of students at the forefront.

Anyone interested in meeting Appleton and inquiring about available space in the class for this year and next can contact the school.

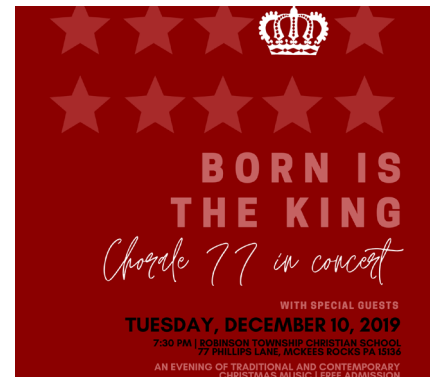


Kara-Mia Appleton is teaching a new preschool class at Robinson Township Christian School

Chorale 77 to perform Dec. 10

Robinson Township Christian School’s Chorale 77 will perform a special concert Dec. 10 at 7:30 p.m. at Robinson Township Christian School. The school is located at 77 Philips Lane in Robinson Township and the general public is invited to attend. The concert, which is free, will feature a heartwarming and festive blend of traditional and contemporary Christmas music in celebration of the season. The performance will feature music from composers Ola Gjeilo, Eric Whitacre, Tomas Luis de Victoria, John Stainer, Dan Forrest, Keith Getty and many more.

Chorale 77 is led by director and music educator Lindsay Shaffer. It is comprised of RTCS high school students, alumni, teachers, board members, family members and friends of the school. The choir has put in lots of hard work preparing for this first performance of the season.



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Archangel Gabriel Catholic School

Rise of the Archangel Gabriel Knights

Late last school year, students were invited to nominate and vote for their new school mascot. This was a much-anticipated revealing, as their hallways, uniforms and cheers would all be emblazoned with the school symbol. The knight, a symbol of virtue, was chosen. The knight's mighty characteristics include: humility - putting others first; self-discipline - the ability to pursue what is right despite temptations; kindness - treating others well; servant leadership - being devoted; loyalty - staying faithful; perseverance - staying with it; honesty - always being truthful; purity - having a clean heart; and integrity - filled with sincerity and honesty. Each student will be continuing their journey with the goal of becoming an Archangel Gabriel Knight. Classroom teachers and staff will be conducting lessons and activities to ensure students "rise up" both inside and outside of the classrooms.



A student shows off an Archangel Gabriel shirt with the school's new logo. PHOTO BY HARRY GIGLIO, HARRY GIGLIO PHOTOGRAPHY

Birthday bags fill more than just the bag

As students in kindergarten through eighth grade are celebrating their birthday month at Archangel Gabriel, they are also asked to reflect upon those who are in need. As such, they collect toiletries, fill a lunch-sized bag and then decorate the bag to create a cheerful birthday card to go with it. The bags are then collected at the end of the month and donated to the Coraopolis Community Development Foundation. This small token is truly helpful to those who are in need. Oftentimes, these necessities, which are in fact luxuries to some, are taken for granted. This small act of kindness not only helps those who are on the receiving end but also students as they grow to be altruistic.

St. Philip Catholic School

STORIES
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Going global

A group of St. Philip students in grades five through eight are participating in a unique program called Design Squad Global, which is co-sponsored by WQED, Pittsburgh engineering companies, and the Society of Engineers of Western Pennsylvania. Through the program, participants in the U.S. and India will complete the same four engineering challenges, all of which emphasize the design process, challenge students to solve problems and highlight engineering as a powerful tool for making a difference in the world.



St. Philip seventh-graders Addison Hazuda, Natalie Kirsch and Rachel McDevitt test their "plane" on the zip line. PHOTO SUBMITTED

Partner classes in India and the U.S. then share their experiences by exchanging design ideas, photos and videos on a digital platform. In addition to expanding their engineering experiences, students will begin developing their "global competence," which is the ability to communicate and collaborate with people from different backgrounds, cultures and perspectives. Volunteers from the Society of Engineers will also mentor participants as they complete the challenges in their schools.

Participants will be asked to create an invention that will have a focus on environmental sustainability. Inventors will record a presentation of their innovations in a "Shark Tank" format so it can be reviewed by a panel of engineers at WQED.

The project will culminate with an opportunity for students to team up with other Pittsburgh Design Squad Global member schools to solve three challenges at the WQED studios; see presentations by the sponsoring Western Pennsylvania companies such as PPG, Ansys, Mine Safety Appliance; and have their inventions showcased.

The overarching goal of the program is for students to see themselves as young engineers with the power to make a difference.



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For more information, email us at info@OakdaleYouthLeague.com or call 412-327-4508.

Online registration opens on Jan. 15. Register by Feb. 29 at: www.OakdaleYouthLeague.com



In-person registration is also available on:

**Saturday, Feb. 1 - 12 - 4 p.m.
Wednesday, Feb. 12 - 6 - 7 p.m.**

**Oakdale Community Center
104 Seminary Avenue in Oakdale**

The Montour School District

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Evening: 3:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.
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Interested candidates are encouraged to submit a resume, application, and any questions to: hr@montourschools.com

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High school receives \$30,000 competitive integrated employment grant

In August, a team of District professionals applied for a \$30,000 Pennsylvania Department of Education grant to expand effective, competitive, integrated employment programming for students with disabilities. The ultimate goal of this grant was to provide high school students with disabilities with community-based paid and unpaid work experiences during the 2019-2020 school year.

The team was excited to learn in September that they were awarded the full amount of the grant. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 74 grant applications were submitted and only 17 were granted, including West Allegheny's, which was titled, "West Allegheny Ready:



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Students learn practical skills that prepare them for the workforce.

Preparing Competitive Employees for Sustainable Careers."

Historically, the high school has operated a School to Work program within its Life Skills Classroom and approximately three to four students participate each year. The program offered opportunities for students with disabilities to learn both soft and professional skills through community-based experiences that local employers value. The program also provided the framework for the grant application and will be expanded to a greater number of students. Up to 30 high school students with disabilities are expected to be afforded opportunities under the grant.

Throughout the months of November and December, parents of eligible students will be informed of the grant process. Those students will complete career and employment interest inventories and, ultimately, a group of students will be selected to engage in viable work experiences. Such experiences may include job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, community-based work programs and competitive employment.

As 2020 commences, a team of West Allegheny professionals will then work to secure partnerships with local businesses, agencies and organizations that may be interested in offering work experiences to one or more of the selected students for the remainder of the school year. Currently, many of the District's students are employed at locally owned stores and businesses.

These opportunities have been successful due to valued and respected partners. Through this new grant, the team plans to continue collaborating with its existing partners and form new partnerships with additional employers. Supporting local businesses and organizations will continue to be a concentrated focus as additional opportunities are created for selected high school students.

Once employment partners are identified, the team will pair selected students with partners. This phase of the grant process should evolve in February, with students fully integrated into their community-based employment settings by March of 2020. Between March and August of next year, student performance in employment settings will be continuously monitored by the grant team. Job coaching will be included, if necessary. As well, regular communication and site visit meetings will occur with employment partners.

As the grant timeline is fulfilled, which can be expected to occur by August of 2020, the team is hopeful that some of the selected students may be able to continue at their respective sites if the experiences with the employment partners have been successful.



Tammy Adams, West Allegheny's assistant to the superintendent for special education and student services, shared that, "A significant priority of the West Allegheny School District is to promote career, college and community awareness; therefore, through receipt of this funding source, our team will be able to increase opportunities for our students with disabilities and expand upon partnerships that have already been established. It is truly a win-win for our District and our community."

Local employers, business partners and community organizations may contact Adams at tadams@westasd.org if interested in learning more about providing community-based work experiences through this grant opportunity.

#WeAreStudentStrong

Sophomore recognized for courageous actions

Sophomore Sean Williams was recognized at the October 16 school board meeting for his courageous and caring support of a District bus driver following a recent accident in which no students were involved. Williams ensured the driver's safety by climbing on the bus and supporting him until emergency responders arrived on the scene. Mark Schmitt, CEO and president of Monark Student Transportation, presented Williams with a special award and joined Dr. Jerri Lynn Lippert, superintendent, and school board members in showing their sincere appreciation and gratitude for his actions.



Dr. Jerri Lynn Lippert, superintendent; Joe Hogg, bus driver; Sean Williams; Cooper Williams; Mark Schmitt, CEO and president of Monark Student Transportation; and Frank Hernandez, high school principal, recognize Sean Williams at a school board meeting.

District awarded fourth Safe Schools Grant

Over the past five years, West Allegheny School District has received \$195,000 in school safety grant funding. Four of these grants have been awarded by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as Safe Schools Grants. Recently, the District was awarded another grant totaling \$20,000 to fund the installation of an integrated digital card access system across all school facilities. This system will eliminate manual key access to all schools to ensure fully monitored building access. Past grants have funded such security measures as the Raptor Visitor Management System, NaviGate Prepared and additional school cameras. Dr. Christopher Shattuck, assistant superintendent, and Ken Fibbi, director of facilities and operations, coauthored the grant application.



West Allegheny explores NMSI sustainability options

West Allegheny was pleased to host administrators from several school districts across Southwestern Pennsylvania on October 3 when they came together with National Math + Science Initiative regional administrators to explore Advanced Placement sustainability options for students and teachers. Superintendent, Dr. Jerri Lynn Lippert, and high school administration welcomed school leaders and the discussion around ensuring ongoing AP achievement.

Lippert initiated conversations with NMSI to determine the feasibility of continuing high quality professional development for teachers. Since West Allegheny received the \$730,000 career and college readiness grant four years ago, it has proven highly successful.



District administrators from across the region attend NMSI exploration meeting hosted by West Allegheny.

#WeAreTeacherProud

Superintendent's Message

One of my favorite times of the school year is in October, when we annually celebrate the academic excellence of our high school students excelling at the college level. For the past four years, we have proudly hosted a special award ceremony to recognize outstanding academic performance on Advanced Placement exams. This year, on October 24, we expanded our celebration to include our Early College in High School Academy (ECIHA) students, who participated last school year in the launch of West Allegheny's Early College Program. In the first year of West Allegheny's ECIHA, we had 212 students complete 448 CCAC concurrent courses, earning a total of 1,445 college credits. Similarly, we had a record number of students taking AP courses, with 395 students enrolled in 730 AP courses.

This year, we recognized approximately 120 students who achieved distinction at the National College Board level as well as West Allegheny's ECISHA Honors College. West Allegheny's Honors Early College in High School designation is modeled to parallel a dean's list from colleges and universities as well as the College Board award levels. Our students' accomplishments are amazing! It is wonderful to witness our parents and students taking advantage of the opportunities provided at West Allegheny to advance their post-secondary success. The chart outlines the College Board and Honors Early College in High School Academy distinction criteria as well as the number of students attaining the award.



ABOVE: District and high school administrators congratulate AP Capstone Diploma recipients Cole Lanni, Julia Mitchell and Jacob Jones. BELOW: All recipients come together following the recognition ceremony.



National College Board Distinctions	Criteria	# of West Allegheny Students Earning Award
Advanced Placement Scholar	Students earning a score of 3 or higher on 3 or more AP exams	31 WA Students
Advanced Placement Scholar with Honors	Students earning a score of 3 or higher on 4 or more AP exams with an average exam score of 3.25 or higher	12 WA Students
Advanced Placement Scholar with Distinction	Students earning a score of 3 or higher on 5 or more AP exams with an average exam score of 3.50 or higher	17 WA Students
National Advanced Placement Scholar	Students earning a score of 4 or higher on 8 or more AP exams with an average exam score of at least 4 on all AP exams taken	4 WA Students
Advanced Placement Capstone Certificate	Students earning a score of 3 or higher in both AP Capstone courses – AP Seminar and AP Research	2 WA Students
Advanced Placement Capstone Diploma	Students earning a score of 3 or higher in both AP Capstone courses – AP Seminar and AP Research and a 3 or higher on 4 additional AP exams	5 WA Students
Honors Early College in High School Academy	Criteria	# of West Allegheny Students Earning Award
Honors Early College in High School Scholar	Students completing 3 CCAC courses with a 3.0 GPA or higher	30 WA Students
Honors Early College in High School Scholar with Honor	Students completing 4 CCAC courses with a 3.0 GPA or higher	13 WA Students
Honors Early College in High School Scholar with Distinction	Students completing 5 CCAC courses with a 3.0 GPA or higher	6 WA Students
Honors Early College in High School Elite Scholar	Students completing 4 CCAC courses with a 4.0 GPA or higher	9 WA Students

We look forward to recognizing this year's cohort of students in 2020 and those going forward as the academic opportunities offered by West Allegheny continue to expand for all students.

Dr. Jerrí Lynn Lippert, Superintendent

Cavalcade of Bands turns 40



The Marching Pride takes to the field to perform 80s-themed selections for the 40th Annual Cavalcade of Bands in October at Joe P. DiMichela Stadium.

The West Allegheny Marching Pride hosted its 40th Annual Cavalcade of Bands in celebration of spectacular music, entertainment and tradition. The event was held on October 5 and featured marching band performances from Brentwood, Cornell, Highlands, Lakeview, North Allegheny, Northgate, Taylor Allderdice and West Allegheny high schools. The event continues to draw audiences of all ages from across the region.

Under the leadership of TJ Fox, participation in the Marching Pride has continued to grow, with over 140 students involved this year.

#WeAreInnovators&Designers

“The Velveteen Rabbit” entertains audiences of all ages

The childhood favorite tale of “The Velveteen Rabbit” came to life on the West Allegheny stage as performances of the fall play were held October 12, 13 and 19. The production was primarily student-led, from the actors, to the stage, tech, art and costume crews. The play was under the guidance of teacher Mike Shaffer and high school staff members.

The cast and crew of “The Velveteen Rabbit” take to the stage during rehearsals.



Speech & Debate continues tradition

For the eighth year in a row, the Speech & Debate team continued its tradition of excellence as it earned membership in the prestigious National Speech and Debate Association’s 200 Club. Because the West Allegheny chapter achieved a total of 200 or more points during the 2018-2019 school year, it has earned this significant distinction. Students earn points and degrees based on competitive and service-related activities, ranging from the Degree of Merit with 25 or more points to the Degree of Premier Distinction with 1,500 or more points.



#WeAreTeacherProud

High school students represent West Allegheny at PMEA showcase

Sophomore Nathan Presutti and juniors Mya Clay and Cerina Wichryk were selected to represent West Allegheny in the PMEA District I Honors Chorus, which performed at Waynesburg High School in October. Over the course of the two-day festival, students rehearsed a variety of choral selections with some of the top musicians in the area. The chorus was under the direction of guest conductors Ryan Keeling and Michael Semancik.



Cerina Wichryk, Mya Clay and Nathan Presutti take the stage at PMEA District I Honors Chorus.

Guest speakers hope to raise mental health awareness

The Stand Together committee at the high school welcomed recovery speaker Jordan Corcoran from Listen, Lucy, which seeks to raise awareness and acceptance of those living with mental illness, for a freshmen assembly. During the assembly, senior Jae Volk and other students from Stand Together spoke about the committee's goal of raising awareness of mental illness - as well as substance abuse - and decreasing the stigma that often prevents others from seeking help.



Guest speaker Jordan Corcoran and senior Jae Volk share personal stories of living with mental illness.

#WeAreStudentStrong

Students learn leadership by example



Students in Action members gather at the North Fayette Community Center.

The Students in Action organization took a field trip to the North Fayette Community Center on October 15 to engage in a workshop centered on leadership, respectful relationships and building a better community. The session, led by Crisis Center North, inspired students to identify adolescent social issues and acknowledge optimistic bias they may have toward these issues.

Students then listened to guest speaker Sister Mary Gianna Thornby, who is a survivor of the Columbine shooting. She spoke about anti-bullying and realizing one's self-worth. Thornby also discussed ways to take life's issues one small step at a time in order to overcome difficult obstacles. Faculty advisors are Kennan Grabner, Kateri Meinert, and Sgt. Mike Hayes.

Best Buddies membership earns recognition

In its inaugural year, the middle school Best Buddies program was nominated as the new chapter of the month by the Pennsylvania Best Buddies Organization. The honor recognized the fact that the program had enrolled an amazing 80 members in its first year. The Best Buddies program is dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development and inclusive living. Program advisors are Melissa Bunyak, Kaitlyn Huff, Marcella Selestow, Mary Jo Seybert, Julie Hahka and Michelle Baird.

RIGHT: Students design name tags to introduce themselves during the inaugural meeting of the Best Buddies.
BELOW: Middle school students in the Best Buddies program meet with advisors to plan activities for the school year.



#WeAreWestA

Middle school Horizons students know their history

Horizons students in grades six through eight attended the Heinz History Bowl on October 22. Two teams of West Allegheny students competed in the history-based competition and, following several rounds of competition, the team of Hope Fronczek, Eva Lutz, Cassandra Wolfe and Alicia Stierheim won first place in their grade-level competition. The competition was sponsored by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Gifted teacher Krista Dapper serves as the faculty advisor.



ABOVE: Students Eva Lutz, Alicia Stierheim, Hope Fronczek and Cassandra Wolfe proudly display the certificates they won during the Heinz History Bowl.
RIGHT: Heinz History Center serves as the backdrop and host of the annual History Bowl.



McKee neighborhood welcomes special guest

October 15 was a special day in the McKee Elementary neighborhood as the school welcomed William Isler. As the former executive director of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media - and the president of Family Communications, Inc. - Isler offered a unique perspective on education's past, present and future. During the presentation, which also provided an insightful professional learning opportunity for staff, District and school administrators enjoyed gaining insights into the show's approach to educating the whole child. Pulling from McKee's history when "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" filmed a segment at the school in 1979, Isler helped enhance McKee's Mister Rogers theme for the school year.

William Isler talks with faculty at McKee about Fred Rogers and shares stories about some of his favorite guests.



Fifth-graders learn lessons in manners

Throughout September and October, Wilson fifth-graders welcomed Ms. Aquino from the Good Manners Group. Aquino taught lessons in table, cellphone and movie theater etiquette, as well as proper written communication. The lessons culminated in a brunch that tested their lessons learned.

Fifth grade boys practice proper manners.



Red Ribbon Week celebrated across the elementary schools

Elementary students and staff from all three elementary schools celebrated Red Ribbon Week October 23-31. This year's theme, "Send A Message. Stay Drug Free," was a call to action to speak out in support of making healthy choices. It was also a reminder that, by staying drug free, one sends a message to themselves and others about how much one values themselves, their overall health, their community and their future. Student-centered activities were scheduled throughout the week.



LEFT: Donaldson Elementary students proudly display their red ribbons.



BOTTOM LEFT: Students at Wilson Elementary don their red in support of making healthy choices.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Pajama Day at McKee Elementary was a huge hit.



Fall teams make playoff runs

Several fall sports teams wrapped up their seasons with playoff berths. Among them were the soccer teams, which both capped off their seasons with PIAA post-season runs.

After a convincing 5-1 WPIAL quarterfinal victory over Mars, the boys soccer team found themselves in the AAA semi-finals. A 1-0 victory over Hampton put the Indians in the championship game for the third consecutive year. Just like last year, the team again faced Franklin Regional at Highmark Stadium. Unable to come away with the victory, the team earned a PIAA playoff berth and defeated Hollidaysburg to advance to the quarterfinals against Lower Dauphin. After finding themselves down late in the game by a score of 3-1, the team fought back to within a goal of tying with 12 minutes left but they were unable to complete the comeback.

The girls soccer team, meanwhile, advanced to the WPIAL playoffs after winning their first section title in school history. Following that success, the team made its first-ever appearance in the WPIAL tournament semi-finals. Despite losing to Plum, the team won its PIAA consolation game against Belle Vernon 3-0 and then defeated Hollidaysburg 7-3 in the first round to advance to play WPIAL champion Mars in the quarterfinals. A loss closed out their season.

The girls volleyball team also went deep into the WPIAL playoffs after a 3-2 victory over Hampton put the team in the quarterfinals, where they lost to Knoch. The girls tennis team advanced to the WPIAL team playoffs as well, but came up short against Mars.

Homecoming king and queen crowned



Members of the court included (back row): freshman, Reilly Lada; sophomore, Mason Marchinsky; senior, John Rink; senior, Quellan Portis; senior, Vishaal Saravanan; senior, Connor Stout; senior, Jackson Faulk; senior, Robert Moran; and junior, Sean Seamon; and (front row): freshman, Emma Kyle; sophomore, Morgan Pichi; senior, Alexa Ledford; senior, Jenna Hollyfield; senior, Annie Koester; senior, Isabella Taddy; senior, McKenzie Zeigler; senior, Britney Wilson; and junior, Allie Godwin.

The 2019 homecoming king, Vishaal Saravanan, and queen, Britney Wilson, were crowned prior to the start of the September 20 football game against Upper St. Clair. Students from each grade were selected to represent their respective class, with seniors in the running for the crowns.



Seniors Vishaal Saravanan and Britney Wilson crowned homecoming king and queen.



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FOR WEEKLY EVENTS, SCHOOL CLOSINGS, AND DELAYS.

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All material has been prepared, written or edited by Karen Ruhl, School Community Relations Coordinator, West Allegheny School District (724) 695-5274



WESTERN ALLEGHENY COMMUNITY LIBRARY

LIBRARY PROGRAMS & SPECIAL EVENTS

GINGERBREAD HOUSE WORKSHOP

Sunday, December 1, 1:30—3:00 p.m.

OR Monday, December 2, 10:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Our annual Gingerbread House Workshop is one of WACL's longest standing traditions. All ages and skill levels are welcome, but please make sure to bring a can of frosting, a cookie sheet or baking pan to build on, and a sweet treat to share with your friends! We will provide all of the building materials and the instructions. As space is limited, please register participating children online, and let us know what decoration you are bringing.

STAR WARS PARTY

Saturday, December 7

10:30—11:30 a.m.

We are so excited for the release of *The Rise of Skywalker*! To celebrate we are throwing a big party with Star Wars games, crafts, and activities. All ages are welcome! Please register so we know how much to prepare.

ZENTANGLE PARTY

Saturday, December 7

10:30—11:30 a.m.

Get artsy and join us for an introduction to Zentangles – a fun and calming way to doodle that anyone, regardless of artistic experience, can do. **No need to register - just drop in!**

COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE

Saturday, December 14

9:00 a.m. —2:00 p.m.

This holiday season—give the gift of life! Central Blood Bank (aka Vitalant) is once again holding a Blood Drive at the library. Donations are greatly needed this holiday season. Appointments recommended; walk-ins welcome. Check online for details on donor eligibility and to sign up to participate in this worthy cause. All participating donors will receive a fleece neck warmer with the Pittsburgh Penguins/Vitalant logos on the day of donation!

To make an appointment, please:

- Visit vitalant.org, click on the "Donate" button and search with Group code "D056"
- Download the Vitalant - Pittsburgh Mobile App for your smart phone, or
- Call 877-25-VITAL or call the library at 724-695-8150

HOLIDAY HOURS

The library will be CLOSED for the holidays from Tuesday, December 24 - Thursday, December 26. The book drop is available 24/7 for your returns. Plus, don't forget you can download the "WACL Mobile" app (iOS or Google Play) to check your account, request an item, or download an eBook any time, day or night - even on holidays!

For more information on all programs & events, visit www.WesternAlleghenyLibrary.org or call 724-695-8150.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Please check our website for specific dates & to register for all programs.

ADULT

Bookworms

1st Wednesdays, 1:00 p.m.

We Be Book'N Book Club

3rd Thursdays, 6:00 p.m.

Anime & Manga Club

4th Thursdays, 6:00 p.m.

TEEN

Adulting 101

Wednesdays, 4:30 p.m.

Middle Grade Maker Lab

Thursdays, 5:00 p.m.

YOUTH & FAMILY

Baby Circle Time

Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m.

Little's Storytime

Tuesday & Wednesday, 10:30 a.m.

Play K

Wednesdays, 1:00 p.m. OR

Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

Sensory Storytime

Mondays, 10:00 a.m.

LEGO Club

Wednesdays, 4:00 p.m.

Location:

181 Bateman Road
Oakdale, PA 15071

Library Hours:

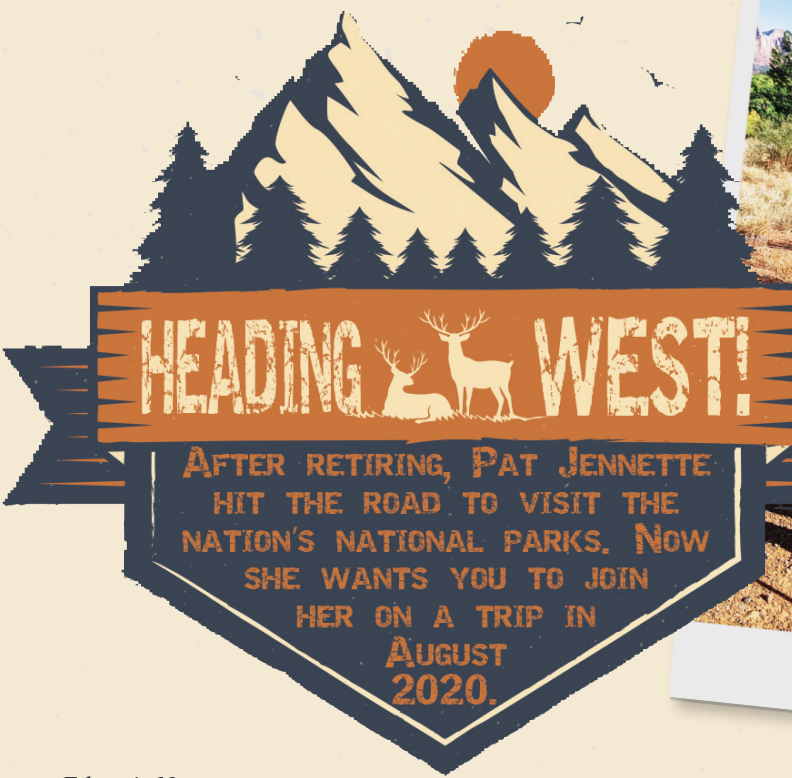
Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Friday – Saturday: 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Sunday: 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.



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By Pat Jennette

GRAND TETONS

When we traveled through Jackson Hole years ago, we were fascinated by beautiful Jenny Lake, a two-mile long by 250-foot deep body of water - a photographer's delight. Did you know that the Tetons have 12 peaks that tower above 12,000 feet? Or that the mountains support a dozen glaciers? While staying over in the cowboy town of Jackson Hole, the day will afford time to explore the Grand Tetons on your own.

Besides day trips that Collette will offer for water fun on either Jenny Lake or the Snake River, a 42-mile drive is

a terrific way to feel the magnificence of the mountains and enjoy the numerous scenic turnouts. Teton Park Road winds around the base of the Teton Range. During the drive, experience the Snake River Overlook, the Menors Ferry Historic District, and views of Jenny Lake. Wildlife abounds, so you'll most likely spot some elk, moose, bison and maybe even a bear or two.

This is a hiker's paradise if you're up for adventure. Try the Taggart Lake Trail, a three-mile round-trip hike that will reward you with a view of the lake, surrounding meadows and conifer groves. The elevation is just 400 feet. Take time before any of the day's adventures to stop at the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor's Center to pick up maps and information. While there, enjoy the floor to ceiling windows that look out on the impressive mountains and enjoy an excellent documentary film on the park.

Editor's Note:

Allegheny West Magazine is teaming up with Collette to offer a unique opportunity to readers. Next August, Collette Vacations will be leading a trip to some of the country's premier national parks out west with this magazine's publisher emeritus, Pat Jennette. Now a seasoned traveler, Pat has made it her mission since she retired in 2013 to visit all of the country's national parks. In our last edition, Pat wrote about the first five stops on the trip. This column picks up where the second left off:

If you've been reading this article series, you already know that Allegheny West Magazine has partnered with Collette to offer an amazing 12-day tour of the national parks of the West next August. This is the third and final article showcasing this National Parks Tour.

The tour is starting to fill! If you've ever thought about taking a trip completely planned out by someone else - with airfare, transportation, lodging, meals and more included - to some of our most popular national parks, this is an incredible opportunity! The tour starts Aug. 8 in Scottsdale, Arizona and ends Aug. 20 in Rapid City, South Dakota.

The entire tour includes Scottsdale, Sedona, Lake Powell, Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce, Grand Teton National Park, Jackson Hole, Salt Lake City and more.

We're hosting another informational session on Tuesday, Jan. 14 at the Robinson Township Library at 6 p.m. We hope you'll join us!

This article will give you an insight into more of our country's beautiful national parks that are part of this tour.

National Parks of America Tour with Pat Jennette Five Parks in the American West Aug. 8-20, 2020

Free Information Session:

Jan. 14, 6 PM

Robinson Township Public Library
1000 Church Hill Rd, 15205
gateway.gocollette.com/link/985315
travel@awmagazine.com

FIND YOUR PARK

The Grand Tetons are reflected in Jenny Lake.



MOUNT RUSHMORE AND CRAZY HORSE

This day is a two-for-one opportunity to view iconic landmarks that pay tribute to the importance of both Native Americans and our nation's early progress.

Dedicated to the Native Americans of this great land, the Crazy Horse monument has been a work in progress for decades. Carved using private funds, it represents the image of Tasuke Witco, leader of the Oglala Lakota Indians, who fought for and defended the Lakota people until his demise. The carving's completion isn't expected any time soon. Begun seven decades ago, and drawing more than one million visitors annually, the monument is a dedication to perseverance and persistence. While here, visitors can explore the Native American Cultural Center and hear Native Americans discuss the movements of their dances and the significance of wearing different feathers and clothes.

One of our country's most famous landmarks - Mount Rushmore - will give us an up-close opportunity to see the massive carvings of four presidents. When we visited this monument, we were entertained with a fabulous evening presentation of patriotic music and lights as we sat in the bleachers looking up at the monument.

Walk the Avenue of the Flags as you approach the monument and the short Presidential Trail to see the monument up close. Visit the Sculptor's Studio and enjoy the surrounding Black Hills of South Dakota that encompass the monument area.

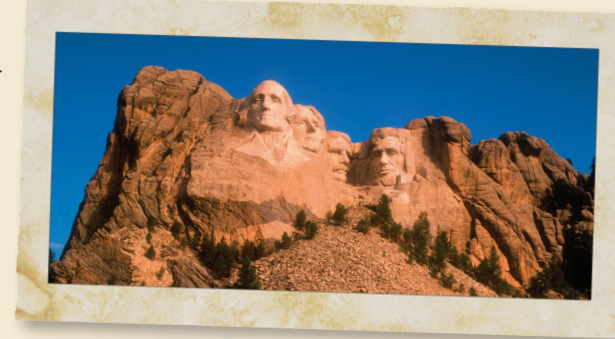
Do you know who the four presidents are on the monument? They're George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore

Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. Why these presidents, you may ask? The monument is dedicated to the first 150 years of America's history and the four presidents who were known to be the most significant to the country's progress during that era.

The tour will end this evening with a farewell dinner and a special presentation by a local Lakota Native American. We'll depart the next morning from Rapid City for home.

As one who has visited all but two of the spectacular stops on this tour, I can highly recommend this trip! It's a way to see so much of our nation's beauty in such a well-planned timeframe. Join us Jan. 14 to learn more!

Pat Jennette is the founder and now publisher emeritus of Allegheny West Magazine. A former North Fayette Township resident, she and her husband became full-time RVers upon retiring with the goal to visit every national park. They are members/supporters of the National Park Foundation, National Parks Travelers Club, and the National Parks Conservation Association. Pat has presented programs on the national parks at local libraries and at RV parks around the U.S. Their goal is to visit all 61 national parks, which are part of the 419 total national park sites that cover all 50 states as well as American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These include national monuments, seashores, historic sites and others.



Mount Rushmore is one of the final stops on the trip.



During our stop in Yellowstone to see Old Faithful, you'll also be able to see the Grand Prismatic Spring.

YELLOWSTONE

This park is a MUST SEE. It's known as one of the "big daddies" of the National Park Service. Our visit to Yellowstone was in the month of June many years ago. We spent two days here, experienced a very cold overnight stay that forced us to sleep in our van, and saw Old Faithful in its heightened glory. Being on a tour, the experience this time will be much more comfortable due to the tour bus and hotel accommodations!

Yellowstone has fascinated visitors ever since it was deemed a national park in 1872. Today, nearly 150 years later, its thermal pools, geysers, mud pots, hot springs and wildlife draw visitors from around the world.

Yellowstone is a geologic wonder and changes from season to season. At last record, there were more than 10,000 geothermal features in the park, of which 500 are geysers. The most famous one, Old Faithful, averages 130 feet high, lasts for up to five minutes, and spouts on a regular schedule - hence why it's called "Old Faithful." Boardwalks throughout the park's geothermic areas allow visitors to get a closer view of these bubbling water features.

The tour will exit the park on its east side as we head to Cody, stopping at the Buffalo Bill

Center before going on to Sheridan for the evening. On this leg, the spectacular Yellowstone Lake provides eye candy and a terrific opportunity for photographers.

Mammoth Hot Springs Hill is yet another geothermic feature in Yellowstone.



Holiday Guide

Festive events in and around your area

Light-Up Events

Jump in the car, put on some holiday music and head out to enjoy the twinkling lights of the holiday season at these events.

Christmas Light Up Celebration, through Jan. 5

For the past 25 years, longtime Clinton residents Patty and Lloyd Faux have been organizing a Christmas light-up display in Clinton Park. Starting in September of each year, an all-volunteer effort

gets off the ground to set up the enormous display. With hundreds of decorations, the

light-up features an eclectic mix of themes appropriate for the season. The one-mile drive-through route winds through Clinton Park's scenic woodlands, the entrance to which sits just off Route 30. The \$10 entrance fee per car goes right back into the community, via a committee that runs the light up. Those dollars address a variety of needs in the community throughout the year. Various community organizations, residents and businesses also sponsor a Christmas tree display toward the end of the drive.

This year's light up is open every evening through Jan. 5, from 5-10 p.m., including on holidays. For more, follow the Christmas Light Up on Facebook: @ChristmasLightUpCelebration.



The Christmas Light-Up Celebration in Clinton Park features light-up displays along a mile-long route.

North Fayette Tree Lighting, Dec. 6

Head to the North Fayette Community Center at Donaldson Park for this special Christmas tree light-up celebration. The West Allegheny High School show choir and middle school chorus will both be on hand singing Christmas carols. There were also be train rides in the gym, holiday crafts and, of course, visits with Santa. The fun kicks off at 6:30 p.m. and the light up takes place soon after at 6:45 p.m. Visit www.north-fayette.com for more.

More Area Light Ups

Moon Lights Holiday Festival, Dec. 5,

6-9 p.m., Moon Park, crafts, music, story time, ice carving, Christmas hayride, train rides, Christmas carols, snacks, visit from Santa, outdoor event, so dress accordingly, moonparks.org.

Robinson Christmas Light Up, Dec. 6,

6:30-7:30 p.m., Clever Park, hot cocoa, Christmas carols, visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus, fireworks show at 6:30 p.m., townshipofrobinson.com.

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December 8	December 15	December 27	December 30

Santa Ski Day
 BOYCE PARK
 December 21

FOR MORE DETAILS, VISIT ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/SPECIALEVENTS

Visits with Santa, breakfasts and more

Coraopolis UMC Cookie Walk, Dec. 7

This annual "cookie walk" takes place at the Coraopolis VFW and this year benefits the Coraopolis United Methodist Church choir. Count on homemade cookies, activities for the kids, singers, a visit from Santa and more. The cookie walk takes place 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Questions? Call (412) 264-3727.

Holiday Canvas Painting, Dec. 7

Sign up for this family-friendly crafting event offered through Findlay Township Parks and Rec. You can select from 10, Christmas-themed pre-drawn 8" x 10" canvases. Email sstrain@findlaytwp.org for more. Takes place 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Moonlight and Cocoa, Dec. 7-8

Be sure to register ahead of time for this popular event at the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden, which has been expanded to two nights this year. The fun runs 6-9 p.m. both evenings. The garden will be decorated with 1,000 luminaries. Bundle up by a cozy fire and enjoy live music on the patio. Cocoa and desserts will be served. Shop for unique gifts, including seasonal plants, in the gift shop. Spaces fill up fast, however, so register at pittsburghbotanicgarden.org under "Events."

Sturgeon VFD Lunch with Santa, Dec. 8

Head to the Sturgeon VFD at 526 Main Street for this special annual lunch with Santa. There will be crafts, photos with Santa, a gift and more. Lunch combo meals are \$5. For more, visit north-fayette.com.

Kids Holiday Cookie and Craft Time, Dec. 11

Findlay Township Parks and Rec. is also offering this crafting session for kids in grades K through eight. Kids will make a special craft and decorate cookies for Santa. Caregiver must attend. Seating is limited so call to register: (724) 695-0500.

St. Matrona Sisterhood Cookie Walk, Dec. 14

A huge assortment of delectables awaits at this cookie walk at the St. Matrona Sisterhood of Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church at 220 Mansfield Boulevard in Carnegie. Swing by between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and fill your to-go container with selections like nut crescents, fruit-filled kolache, Ukrainian truffles, Italian rum balls and more. Proceeds help the sisterhood maintain and beautify the church. Questions? Call (724) 348-7326.



Capture the magic of the holiday with a photo with Santa in his winter wonderland at The Mall at Robinson, through Dec. 24



Santa and Mrs. Claus (above) will be taking gift requests at The Mall at Robinson this holiday season in their winter wonderland (below).

List checked: twice. Nice list: approved. Now bring along the whole family to The Mall at Robinson for a keepsake photo with Santa in his winter wonderland, located on the lower level near Banana Republic. This magical experience includes a photo box, Pittsburgh skyline snow globe, snowflakes, a train and a life-sized magna-doodle for kids to play with while waiting to see the big guy.

Be sure to check-in with Santa's helpers when you arrive to be placed in a virtual line with an estimated wait time. You can then explore the mall, enjoy a treat, take a ride on the holiday train near JCPenney or relax in the mall's Time Out Zone near Starbucks. You'll receive a text when it's time to return to the Santa set, where you can enjoy some playtime while waiting to see Santa. Santa's hours are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Santa takes reindeer breaks between 1 and 2 p.m. and 5 and 6 p.m. He'll also be available 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday, with a reindeer break between 2 and 3 p.m.

For more on this and other holiday happenings at The Mall at Robinson, visit www.shoprobinsonmall.com/events/.



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Concerts and shows

Stop in for the "Sounds of the Season" DAR Meeting, Dec. 7

Each year, the local Jacob Ferree chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution hosts a special holiday-themed event for their December meeting. **This year, on Dec. 7, they'll be meeting at 11 a.m.** at the Sewickley Valley YMCA. After a social hour and ornament exchange, there will be a special presentation on the history of Christmas carols. The luncheon takes place at the Walter Brannon Community Center.

RSVP by **Nov. 30** to Ruth Pickett at (724) 538-4623 or rpickett12351@embarqmail.com.

Have a question? Contact Melissa Moore at melissamdar@gmail.com.

Head to Carnegie for "The Nutcracker" this December

The Andrew Carnegie Free Library and Music Hall opened in 1901 and, alongside concerts featuring world-class performers, it also puts on a couple of shows featuring local performers each year. Its performance of "The Nutcracker" is an annual holiday tradition that started 44 years ago. This year's show will feature over 60 dancers, many of them area students, ranging from age 5 to adult. Performances will be held over two weekends starting **Dec. 13 and ending Dec. 22. Performances take place at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Matinee performances take place at 2 p.m. on Sundays.** Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$18 for seniors and children. Purchase tickets at the door. For more, call (412) 279-8887 or visit www.carnegieperformingartscenter.com.

Catch this Christmas concert in Oakdale, Dec. 7

The Trinity Jazz Orchestra will be performing in a free concert at The Rock Youth and Family Center in downtown Oakdale on **Dec. 7 at 7 p.m.** The show, which takes place on Pearl Harbor Day, will honor veterans and celebrate Christmas. Visit The Rock online at rockyouthandfamilycenter.com.

Enjoy a Christmas symphony, Dec. 8, 3 p.m.

The West Hills Symphonic Band is made up of professional and amateur musicians of all ages who play because they love music. Concerts are always free to attend and usually feature band arrangements of classical tunes. The band's last concert of the year is a holiday-themed show that takes place **Dec. 8 at 3 p.m.** at West Allegheny High School. Entitled "Holiday Cheer," this concert will feature traditional Christmas carols, Hanukkah favorites, memorable melodies from great television specials and a salute to the Vienna Symphony's annual New Year's Eve concert. Stay up to date at www.whsb.org.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL HOLL; WWW.HOLLPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

West Allegheny Holiday Concerts

Concerts take place at the high school auditorium, unless otherwise indicated.

Percussion Ensemble Holiday Concert, Dec. 5, 7-9 p.m.

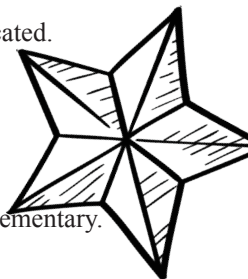
Sixth, Seventh, Eighth Grades Band Concert, Dec. 10, 7-9 p.m.

High School Bands Holiday Concert, Dec. 12, 7-9 p.m.

Wilson Band and Chorus Holiday Concert, Dec. 16, TBA, Wilson Elementary.

Sixth, Seventh, Eighth Grades Chorus Concert, Dec. 17, 7-9 p.m.

High School Choruses Holiday Concert, Dec. 19, 7-9 p.m.



Get out and beat the wintertime blues with some light exercise

YOGA for Beginners (and Beyond)

Fridays | 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Findlay Township Activity Center
\$5/class

Ever wanted to try yoga, but thought "I'm not fit," "I'm not flexible," "I'm too old," "It's too expensive?" Then stop with the excuses and give this class a try. Yoga is great for everyone. Exercise, stretch and meditate.

Senior Yoga and Qi Gong

Thursdays | 11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Findlay Township Activity Center
FREE to seniors

Gentle stretches and energy flow are sure to fuel the inner fire. Some stretches and flow will be performed from a chair or seated on the ground and others while standing. Class offers mixed levels for all participants. Great for older adults. Questions? Call (724) 695-1976 or email Info@idtsd.net.



Friday Morning Bingo

Fridays: Jan. 31, Feb. 28, March 27, April 24, May 29
Doors open 9 AM | Bingo starts 10 AM
Findlay Township Activity Center

Bring your friends and relatives and join us for a morning of bingo! \$10/packet: includes 3 cards for each regular game, 1 triple card for each special, coffee, water, and light snacks.

Additional packets \$5
 Coverall jackpots \$1
 Bingo dabbers available for purchase. Cancels in the event of inclement weather. Call to check.

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Valentine's Day Canvas Painting



Thursday, Feb. 6 | 6-8 p.m. | Findlay Township Activity Center
 Join us for this family-friendly painting project on 8"x10" canvases. Valentine's Day and springtime pictures will be pre-drawn and there are 12 different ones to choose from! Extra canvases for sale at event. Registration preferred. Limited walk-ins available. \$5/canvas (have selection when registering) Call or email to register: lburns@findlaytwp.org

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Call Event Coordinator Shelly at **(412) 498-3557** for available dates.

Local Shopping

Want a unique holiday gift? Then check out these venues for crafts and other offerings from local artisans.

Moon Township Garden Club's Greens and Things Sale, Dec. 7

This annual event at Robin Hill Park in Moon Township is organized by the Moon Township Garden Club and benefits the club's various philanthropic efforts. Garden club members will be on hand at the carriage house and in the mansion selling handmade seasonal treasures, including swags, centerpieces, wreaths and more from **9 a.m. to 3 p.m.** After you check a few things off your list, saunter over and take a tour of historic Coventry Log Cabin. The Old Moon Township Historical Society will be welcoming visitors throughout the day.

Moon Township Garden Club members raise money for the club's philanthropic efforts by selling centerpieces, wreaths, swags and more at their annual Greens and Things Sale.



Lincoln Avenue Arts offers an eclectic selection of handmade creations from area artists.

Lincoln Avenue Arts

Head over to McDonald this holiday season and check out Lincoln Avenue Arts at 110 West Lincoln Avenue. This artist-run store offers unique, handmade creations crafted by local artisans. Profits from sales go right back to the artists who crafted them. Wares include artwork, stained glass, jewelry, clothing, accessories and much more.

The shop is open **Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.** During the month of December, they're offering 10 percent off purchases of \$25 or more and special deals for return visitors. Check out Lincoln Avenue Arts on Facebook for more information.

Gift idea: A book on vice presidential history from a local author

Here's a bit of trivia for you: who was the first woman chosen as a vice presidential candidate?

How about the first Italian American?

Give up?

The answer to both is Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro, who became the first woman and Italian American to run for vice president when former vice president Walter Mondale selected her as his running mate. Mondale, of course, ran against incumbent President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George H.W. Bush. At the time, Mondale was well aware that he would need something major to bring attention to his candidacy and selecting Ferraro was part of his strategy.

Now, do you know what happened to Ferraro following that election? How about all those other vice presidential nominees who never got the chance to sit in the second highest office in the land? Can you name the former vice presidential candidate who virtually disappeared from sight before being resurrected by a major company in their national advertising campaign? The answer to those questions and more are given in a new book by Moon Township resident Rick Vaccarelli. "They Never Had a Chance to Spit" tells the stories behind the vice presidents who never were and explores what happened to them following their failed election campaigns.

For more, and to download the book, visit neverhadachancetospit.com. The book is also available from amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

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Ever wonder what happened to the men and women who ran for vice president and lost the election? They had a brief rise to national attention and then were gone. What did they do? It's a fun read about the people who lost an office described as "Not worth a bucket of spit."

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- Clinton Park Christmas Light-Up**,
p. 39, see ad for details
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A second chance

Life as a child was rough for Neil Chaffin. By age 11, he was on the streets in Pittsburgh's Duquesne neighborhood, learning, watching and seeing a different way of life.

Chaffin became a rebellious kid, one who was hard to deal with and didn't want to listen.

"I would climb out my bedroom window and be on my way," he says. "Maybe because I was 'fatherless,' never knowing my dad."

Chaffin's mom has always been a woman of faith, and she told her son, "God had His hands on you in my womb." She did her best to keep a roof over her kids' heads, but she made a bad choice and that led to her heroin addiction. She changed. There were mood swings and then she was no longer the same providing mom.

One day when Chaffin was 14, he returned home to find his mom in the bathtub. The water was running and she was unconscious. His call to 911 brought police and medics. They revived her. Alive and back, she started on a new positive direction that day. She became a minister and now, at age 73, she continues to be a pastor at a church in East Liberty.

Her son, however, "Started to spiral out of control in the wrong direction."

A small store in his hometown sold candy in the store's front but, in the back, there was a gambling operation. Chaffin fell into the trap of gambling. One of his best friends lost his life. Gambling had something to do with it.

For Chaffin, one "street" role model that stood out were drug dealers.

"Power comes with money," Chaffin says. "They had power, respect, drove big expensive cars."

Even though Chaffin grew up with faith, he made a choice to become a drug dealer.

"People will do anything for you," he says.

His thinking was, "Money controls everything."

Becoming a father at age 17 to a healthy baby boy did not change his direction. Despite also having two beautiful baby daughters and a woman of faith as a loving wife, Chaffin remained a powerful dealer. He was shot twice. One bullet came close to killing him. He has a 14-inch scar from his chest to his abdomen. That and the scar where the bullet exited his body are constant reminders of how close he came to being killed.

Even that did not stop him. Prison did.

A big article in the newspapers named him "a significant player in the drug world."

From 2003 to 2005, he sat in prison.

"Not until then did I do a full evaluation of understanding my life," he says.

His mom sent him literature, a Bible study. Letters came from family.

"Without the Lord, I would not be here today," he says. "No way possible."



Neil Chaffin

Leaving prison, he knew he did not want to spend any more time there. He had to change his lifestyle.

"Change environment, move to another neighborhood," he says.

First and foremost, he says, "I wanted to raise my kids in the right way."

With no college degree, he began working in remodeling and learning from his co-workers.

"I met a Jewish family in 2006," he says. "For some reason, somehow we were placed at the same place and time."

They owned a lot of property and apartment buildings that were ready to be upgraded. Chaffin found workers good in carpentry, painting and flooring. They began working for this family. Then something else happened.

"This Jewish man sent me to CCAC for heating and cooling," he says. "God is blessing me constantly."

Now, Chaffin is working for a housing company in North Fayette Township. A big guy with a heart to match and a humble, gentle spirit, he lives with his family in Moon Township.

"The fast money became non-existent," he says.

The Jaguar is history. Now, he's happy with his pick-up truck. He's

also very happy to be spending time with his family. Dad is happy coaching his 11-year-old son in basketball and taking him fishing.

Gambling no longer has a hold on Neil.

"Gambling is a distraction, a constant temptation," he says.

He wants others to know.

"You already hit the lottery," he says. "You're already rich at heart. Stay focused. Negative thoughts, shake them off."

Chaffin has found his true purpose in many ways. One is wanting to "inspire as many as possible, especially kids. Some kids may also have a mom on heroin, or not know their dad."

"Don't let that define you," he says. "If I can change, anybody can change."

He is about to start mentoring youth around the city with the Gibson Foundation.

Chaffin felt inspired to tell his story so he wrote the book "Little Duke Boy." It will be available Dec. 6 on Amazon. He's published it under his full name, Tennille Chaffin.

Chaffin is now also a motivational speaker.

"Always expect God to show up in unusual, unique and unexpected ways," he says. "Never allow the harsh decisions of the past to define your journey ahead."

Chaffin and his mom will be speaking at Montours Church this spring.

It has been 14 years since Chaffin's last Christmas in custody. He now enjoys the gift of giving to youth all year round. For him, every holiday season "is a reminder that God gave me the best gift of all, another day and opportunity to get it right."

~ Merry Christmas and Joy in the New Year.



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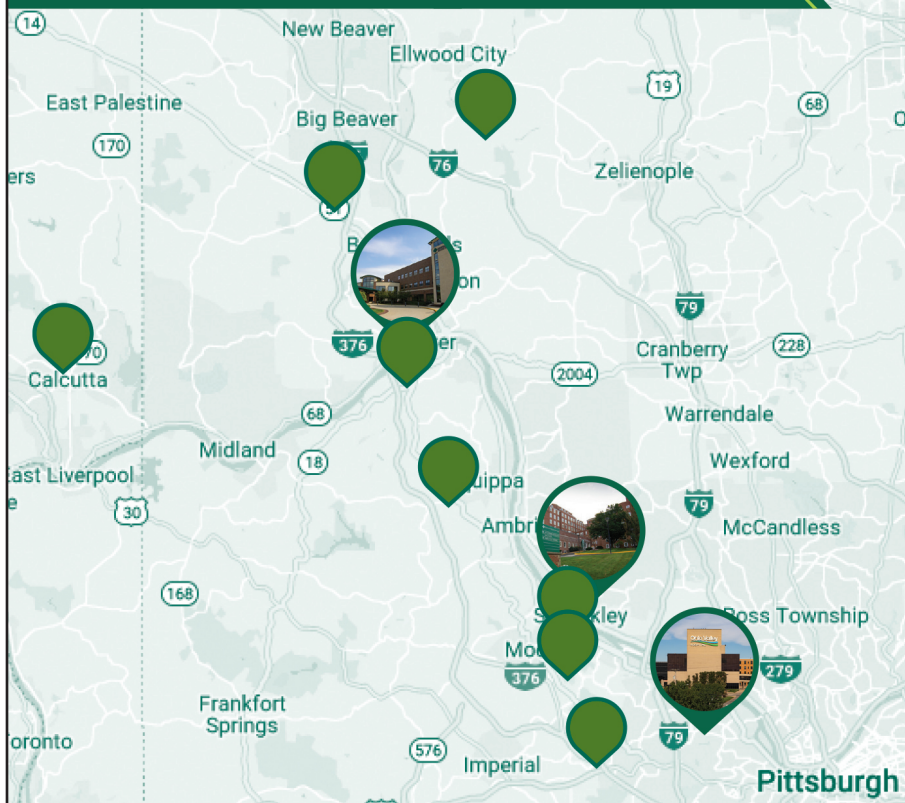
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