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'FOR THE ANIMALS'



By Patt Keith
pkeith@altoonamirror.com

The 2024 annual Season of Sharing fundraising campaign will benefit the Central PA Humane Society.

"I don't know how to put it into words. I was in shock

Central PA Humane Society is this year's Season of Sharing recipient

when I was told," said Becky Felton, CPHS outreach and development director. "There aren't enough tail wags of thanks to represent how grateful we feel."

Felton explained that since she began her fundraising efforts at the shelter nine years ago, she has signed

emails with "many tail wags and thanks." It's a reference to how the animals express their gratitude.

While the shelter runs its own fundraising campaigns, the committee that selects Season of Sharing recipients feels that the shelter's efforts would be augmented through this annual appeal program by reaching potential donors who may not know of how it helps the greater community.

"The shelter is in dire need of greater financial assistance. They face an uphill battle in repairing an old building with outdated, inefficient furnaces and windows and leaky roofs. Plus they face rising utility costs," said Publisher Dan Slep. "We hope to reach readers and others in our community who are unfamiliar with the valuable services the shelter provides and will dig into their wallets to help. The shelter has helped the community for decades and it's time for the community to help them in a bigger way."

The Season of Sharing annual holiday appeal uses the reach of the local newspaper and its online community at altoonamirror.com, the expertise of the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation and residents' generosity to help area nonprofits. It has raised \$394,266 since its inception. To donate, use the form on page 7.

"We are once again thrilled to work with the Altoona Mir-



Mirror photo by Patrick Waksmunski
Adoptable Alaska Husky mix "Mocha".



Mirror photo by Patrick Waksmunski

Gunpowder Grille is Coming to Downtown Clearfield

By Julie Rae Rickard

CLEARFIELD – Two families are coming together to create a new Downtown Clearfield dining experience.

The owners of Bob's Army & Navy store, Dan and Stephanie Kline, recently bought the old Ethan's Café building with the idea of partnering with Bernie and Marissa Ralston for the new Gunpowder Grille.

Dan explained in an interview, that prior to re-opening Bob's he had thought of having a food truck and of even having a café inside Bob's.

"I have always wanted to have a restaurant," he said.

Dan also saw the need for another food option downtown.

"When we worked late, there was no place open to eat."

Dan mentioned that sometimes people have to wait to be approved to purchase a gun, and having somewhere nearby to eat while they wait, seemed like a great idea.

After the building's owner, Thad Durant, approached them about buying it, they took a chance.

Partnering with the Ralstons whose Big Mama's Sauces are already sold in the

store seemed like the perfect fit.

The Ralstons have been in "the food business their whole lives," he noted. They have their own barbeque food truck and do catering.

Their sauce business began with a quest for the perfect combination of hot buffalo sauce and garlic, according to their website, See **Grille**/Page 8

the 1920s. "It's literally coming down around us," Felton explained.

"We expanded in all four directions—the last time in the 1950s — we can't expand any more," Felton said. Because it is so outdated, the buildings lack proper insulation and have drafty windows. Heating bills between November and March run \$3,200 a month. Its piecemeal construction necessitates five furnaces. A sixth furnace heats the wellness center where veterinary care is provided to the animals and is a separate building so staff and animals go outside to access it — which prompts other problems.

"I'm constantly calling someone to repair the roof, every time it rains it leaks. The last time we had \$12,000 worth of water and electrical damage," she said. "It seems like it's one thing after another and we're taking good money and keep throwing it at it."

The organization became a nonprofit in the 1980s and its mission is "to prevent animal neglect and cruelty through education and enforcement while providing a safe haven and finding forever homes for those in need."

About 11 years ago, it became a no-kill shelter which means no matter how unadoptable an animal may

See **Sharing**/Page 6

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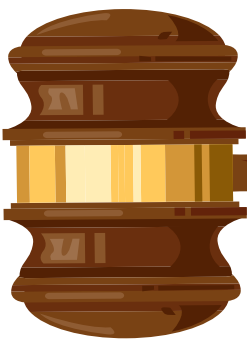
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GREENHOUSE EQUIPMENT AUCTION

Fri., Nov. 15, 2024 – 9:30 AM (Centre County)
www.rgilliganauctions.com

Ron J., Ron S. Gilligan & David C. Zentner will conduct a Public Auction for Sammis Greenhouse located at 2407 Upper Brush Valley Rd., Centre Hall, PA 16828. This is NOT a going out of business auction. Leo is reducing inventory & selling good equipment & supplies.

Bouldin & Lawson Model 16501 bale breaker, Bouldin & Lawson Model 13375 maxi filler, Gutter Connect 60' x 100' Greenhouse, Crop King 20' x 96 ft. & 21' x 96' greenhouses, Several 14' x 96' greenhouses, several 14' x 16' greenhouses, Blackmore needle seeder, Elston propane box truck heater, 10 pallets of Lambert 3.8 ft. bales of all purpose growing mix, (20) 22" x 59" galvanized 4 shelf plant carts w/ handles, germinating chamber, Dramm Chemdose machine, Clarke portable elec. concrete mixer, welding bench/vise, many greenhouse display tables, & growing benches, dozens of wood, wire, & plastic top tables, flood tables, rolls of ground cloth & weed barrier, shade cloth, many shipping & nursery carts, thousands of new & used pots from 2 ½" to 2 gallon, decorative flower planters, concrete water fountains, Japanese maple trees, & chestnut trees, plus much more not listed. **Terms of Contents: Cash or Check only by conclusion of auction. No Internet, absentee, or phone bids will be accepted - no buyers' premiums. Food & Job Johnny Available day of auction - tents if needed. Auctioneers: Ron J. & Ron S. Gilligan & David C. Zentner, #AU339-L & #AU340-L & #AU5442-L.**

All oral info day of auction takes precedence over any & all written ads.
Owner & auctioneers not responsible in case of accidents.



PUBLIC AUCTION

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 12 @ 4:00 PM

Located at Cross Keys Auction Center one mile North of Duncansville, PA 16635 – off route 764 onto Kuhn Lane. Doors open at 2:30 PM.

VEHICLES – HOUSEHOLD – TOOLS

Will be selling the contents, vehicles, and tools from the Larry Wertz estate and others. Partial listing – Whirlpool automatic washer & electric dryer, refrigerator, sofa - love seat - and recliner set, oak dinette set, bedroom & living room furniture, jewelry armoire, stands, lamps, two air conditioners, glassware, linens, flat screen television, and a lot of household related items.

Vehicles & Tools @ 5:00 PM – 2018 Honda Gold Wing Roadsmith Trike (nice shape & loaded), 2004 FSC Honda Silver Wing cycle, 2015 Chevrolet Equinox LT front wheel drive – 4 door automobile (nice condition), Craftsman stack tool boxes & tools, Troybilt snowblower, new Weber grill, patio and lawn furniture, railroad items, Sentry gun safe, shop vac, air compressor, garage tools, 8' picnic table, motorcycle collectibles, and a lot of related items. **NOTE:** Will have confirmation on the 2018 Honda from the Executor. A large auction.

Conducting two auctions. Watch Auctionzip.com ID #1220 for photos. Terms: cash, approved check, or credit card with a 5% fee. Announcements made the day of the auction take precedence over all printed material.

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PUBLIC AUCTION

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 8, 2024 @ 5:00 P.M.
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1821 DORSEY AVENUE, IRVONA PA 16656
****HERTLEIN LIVING ESTATE****

ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES: Oak 1 Step Back Dresser, 2 Door Stand, Bob Crain 29/600 Framed Turkey Print, Terry Redlin 3935/9500 Our Friends Framed Print, Mattel Talking Charming Chatty Doll W/Accessories in OB, Puss N Boots & Little Red Riding Hood Cookie Jars in OB's, (2) Pig Planters, (3) Cast Iron Pig Banks, Turtle Creek Pottery Lead Glazed Christmas Crock, Cast Iron Tractor, Nittany Valley Creamery & 1 Other Milk Bottles, (Enamel Canister Set, Coffee & Teapots & Pitcher), **LONGABERGER:** Vintage Vine Pitcher, (2)Wrought Iron Christmas Tree Candle Holders, Extra Large Mixing Bowl, (10) Small Baskets, Creamer, Crock Pot, Candy Dish, Sugar Bowl, Mug, S&P, Pitcher & (2)Casserole, Handy Oilier Co. Glass Oilier W/Spout, Silvertone Mandolin, Hallmark Holiday Truck, (2)Mr. Bunny Dolls, 1900's German Made Miniature Child Kinder Beer Steins, (2)Ida Davis Rooster Etchings, **GOEBEL:** (1978 12 Tribes of Israel Plate, (24)Goebel Hummels Figurines, Large Assortment of Plates & (2)Angel Bells, (5)Goebel Plates, (2)Goebel Bells), (2)Counter Jars, Searles Buttermilk 1 Gallon Bottle, Glass Paperweight, German Made Figurine Creamer, Porcelain Girl Figurines, (7)1990 Fler Football Player Photo Cards Sets, (5)Topps 1989 Traded Series Football Cards Sets, (3)NFL 1989 Score Supplemental Sets, 1960's Baseball Cards, 1990 Score Rookie & Trade Hockey Cards, Fler & Score 1990 Football Cards, 4' Santa Claus, Few Children's Books, Bean Pot, DeLux Check Writer, Assorted Painted Slates, Welches Tom & Jerry Jelly Jars, 1867 Harding's & Other Old Bibles, (3)Advertising Thermometers, Wagner #3 & USA #3 & #8 No Name Cast Iron Skillets, Metal Spice Tins, Cardboard Hertlein Coal For Sale Sign, 1944 Clearfield/Philipsburg Bell Telephone Book, **LUNCH BOXES:** (1948 Joe Palooka, Disney School Bus, Happy Days W/Thermos, The Rescuers, Dukes of Hazzard W/Thermos & Smiley Face Lunch Boxes), Plastic 101 Dalmatians Lunch Box W/Thermos, Wooden & Cardboard Cigar Boxes, Laymon's 920 Pc. Price Tag Set in OB, Outers Metal 16 Ga. Cleaning Kit in OB, (Reproduction Lyonel Train, Uncle Sam , INT & Ford Tractor Signs), **KNIVES:** (USA Made Bear & Son Pocket Knife, Case 2 Blade, Case Orange County Choppers, (2)Case 2 Blade Pocket Knives, Case John Deere 3 Blade & Schrade Limited Edition Covered Wagon), West Branch Sweater, Sunny Field Lard Pail, Occupied Japan Figurine, R. Pollock Bellefonte PA Pottery Mug, Firestone Repair Kit, 3 in 1 Oil, Marvel, B & D Oil, Monkey Grip & Other Advertising Tins, Assorted Banks, Morning Star Bread Emblem, Tower Box Camera, (2)Pr. Children's Shoes, Wooden Advertising Box, Men's Cuff Links & Tie Clasps, (2)Pilgrims Figurines, 1953 Texaco Fire Chief Gasoline Porcelain Sign, Shur Fit Shoe Sizer, Hall Poppy Pattern Bowls, Miniature Sterling Top Shakers, Bradford Exchange Baseball Plates, Seal Test Pt. Milk Bottle, Blue Ball Canning Jars, White Enamel Pots, McDonalds Toys in OB's, Ball Globe, CNB Bank Bank Train, Altoona Federal Savings Book Bank, Lima Watch Fob, Keystone Ice Cream Clearfield PA Wallet, Safety Razors, Elgin Pocket Watch, Auto Lite Miners Lamp, Fonzie Thermos, (2)Berry Buckets, Peanut Butter Glasses, Pepsi Bat Girl & Warner Brothers Glasses, Hallmark Charlie Brown Figurine, Blue Enamel & Alum. Coffee Pots, Wooden Spools, Rock & Roll 45 Records, (Dept. 56 Red Riding Hood Cookie Jar, Creamer, S&P Set), (2)M&M Mulligan-Ville Figurines, Wooden Ironing Board, (2)Viceroy Cigarette Display Rack Signs.

VINTAGE TOYS: Tonka Hi-Way Dept. Truck & Trailer, Tonka Hi-Way Dept Dragline, **NEW TONKA IN OB'S:** (Mighty Dump Truck, Ground Hawg Pick Up W/Motorcycle, Winross Die Cast TTMA Truck Stops Tractor Trailer, Tin Wind-Up Pinocchio, **PRESSED STEEL:** (Nylint Dump Hauler, Tonka Car Hauler W/3 Cars, Structo Tilt Bed Truck, Structo Rocker Tractor & Dump Wagon, Nylint Farm Truck W/Wagon, Buddy L Car Carrie, Mighty Tonka Loader & Shovel), Big Farm Plastic Peterbuilt 367 Tractor Trailer in OB, Assorted Matchbox & Tonka Cars, Plastic Cars, County National Bank Truck, (8)Aurora Plastic Dump Trucks, Ertl Tanker Truck, Playschool Forrest Ranger in OB, **Fisher Price:** (Parking Garage, Boat, Main Street, Play Family Village & Airplane W/Accessories), Mattel Cat in The Hat in-The-Music Box, Battery Operated Modern Tin Bear, (3)Big Little Books, Eldon's Mother Hen Target, Dominos in Wooden Box, Pinocchio Spin Tops, Child's Toy Flatware Set, Teddy Bear, Rag Dolls, 1972 Howdy Doody Doll, Carl Yastrzemski Louisville Slugger Mini Bat, Hubby Cap Gun, Zip The Monkey Stuffed Animal, Assorted Die Cast Mini Tractors, Tonka Dune Buggies, Fiat 600 Friction Car, Processed Plastic Co. Dump Trailers, Woody Doll, Erector Set in Metal Box, Stanley Tool Center Sign.

VINTAGE CHRISTMAS: 22" White & 19" Green Ceramic Trees, Paramount #177 Illuminated Musical Cathedral, Tree Topper, Glass Ornaments, (2)Lighted Candle Wreaths, Old World Halloween & Christmas Ornaments, Large Assortment of Hallmark Keepsake Ornaments, (3)Goebel Christmas Angel Candle Holders, Candelier's, (2)Empire Blowmold Snowmen & (2)Made in Italy Pinocchio, Peco Standard 6' Silver Tree, Silver Forest 4 ½' Silver Tree, Snapit Color Tone Junior Roto-Wheel.

NEW DIE CAST: **NEW JOHN DEERE IN OB'S:** (Ertl JD 1953 Model 70 Row Crop Tractor, Ertl JD 2 Tractor 50/520 Tractors, Ertl JD MFWD Roe Crop Tractor, Great American Toy Show LT Tractor & Ertl JD Utility Tractor), **NEW IH IN OB'S:** (Ertl IHDT-340 Crawler Tractor, 1993 Ertl IH McCormick National Farm Toy Show Super WD-9 Tractor), **NEW MISCELLANEOUS IN OB'S:** (Ertl Ford 640 Tractor, Ertl Ford 1719 Tractor W/Roll Bar, Ertl 1913 Ford Model T Delivery Truck, Ertl Allis Chalmers WR-45 Tractor, Tomy Farmall 300 Tractor, Ertl Ford 7710 Tractor, Farm Stars Tractor, Ertl Sugar Valley Farm Toy Show 1995 #1655 Oliver Tractor, Ertl Farmall Super M-TA Tractor & Ertl 50th Anniversary 6 Piece Tractor Set), Texaco Die Cast Chevy Pickup & 1950 Chevy Panel Truck, **HALLMARK:** **CUSTOM KEDDIE CARS:** (Welcome Sign, Garage, 1941 Jr. Service Car, 1958 Murray's Champion, 1934 Chrysler Airflow, 1941 Chrysler, 1926 Speedster, 1941 Roadster, 1935 Auburn, 1958 Corvette, 1926 Speedster, Scamp Wagon, 1935 Duesenberg, 1957 Chevy Bel-Air, (2)Dons Street Rod, 1958 Chevy Corvette, 1930 Custom Airplane, 1938 American Graham Roadster, 1955 Custom Chev, 1940 Custom Roadster W/Trailer, 1955 Murray Royal Deluxe, 1949 Gillham Police Ca, 1949 Gillham Sport, (2)1965 Ford Mustang Keddies Cars), **HALLMARK:** (Tractor Ornaments, 1965 Ford Mustang, 1958 Chevy Corvette, 1967 Chevy Camaro, Steelcraft Pedal Car Sign & 1949 Gillham Police Car), Jada 1956 Ford F100, Ertl 1926 Big Mack Bulldog & 1931 Delivery Truck Banks, Bordon 1956 Ford Cracker Jack Pickup, (Gearbox 1912 Ford Standard Oil Tanker Truck, 1912 Ford Red Crown Tanker Truck & 1912 Ford Skelly Oil Tanker Truck Banks), AGCO Allis-Chalmers 175 Tractor, Plastic Nylint Quality Farm & Fleet Tractor Trailer, SpecCast 1957 Chevy H&H Clfd. Hardware Panel Truck, SpecCast TD-14 Crawler W/Blade, Manitou Mack R-Model Mixer, 1st Gear #204 Mack Transport Series R-600 Dump Trailer, Readers Digest Bakery Delivery Van, Disney Mater Truck, Racing Champions 1995 #28 Car, Matchbox Superstar Transporters, (Winross Hershey's, Diet Pepsi, Friend International & Esso Tractor Trailers), Ertl 1098/10,00 Limited Edition Skippy Fire Chief Pedal Car, 1940 Gendron Pedal Car Bank, (2)Ertl Allis-Chalmers 8010 Tractor W/Cab, Pro Hardware 1940 Ford Coup Bank, Liberty Ford Model A Bank, Ertl 1938 Chevy Panel Truck Bank, Ertl GMC 1954 Series 950 Cab W/30' Trailer, Coca Cola Tractor Trailer & 1923 Ford Model T, Ertl White GMC Aerostar W/Tanker, Ertl Firestone Tires Tractor Trailer, Penn Joy Hershey's Chocolate Syrup Tractor Trailer, Ertl Pie Tractor Trailer, Blister Pack Tonka Trucks & Equipment, 1939 Texaco Dodge Airflow Bank, (2)1948 F-1 Ford Trucks, Ertl Automatic Dump Truck, Montgomery Ward 1905 Ford Delivery Car Bank, Ertl Model 4020 Tractor, Matchbox Models of Yesteryear 3 Pack.

MODERN FURNITURE & APPLIANCES: Oak China Cabinet, Oak Curio Cabinet, (3)Oak Chairs, Oak Corner Stand, Oak 4 Drawer Dresser, Mahogany 2 Over 4 Dresser, Oak Dresser Topper W/Mirror, Pine Corner Stand, Hurricane Lamp, (2)Kitchen Table & Chair Sets, (2)Wing Back Chairs, King Size Bedroom Set.

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Obituaries

Judith Ann “Judy” Fetcho

Judith Ann “Judy” Fetcho, 80, of Morrisdale, died Thursday, October 10, 2024, at Penn Highlands DuBois.

Judy was born on December 6, 1943, in Philipsburg, a daughter of the late William L., Sr. and Mary L. (Harper) Kyler. Judy was a graduate of the former Morris Township High School. Following high school, she furthered her education at the Maryland Medical Secretarial School at Hagerstown Business College, Hagerstown, Maryland. She was married on April 20, 1963, in Hagerstown, Maryland, to Ronald “Ron” Fetcho, who survives at home. Judy was employed for most of her working career as a lab technician at the former Philipsburg State General Hospital and then at the former Philipsburg Area Hospital. Following the closure of the Philipsburg Area Hospital, Judy was employed part-time as a teacher’s aide for the West Branch Area School District. Judy was a member of SS. Peter & Paul Catholic Church, Philipsburg. Among her favorite pastimes, she enjoyed making crafts, ceramic items, knitting, crocheting and reading. She was preceded in death by one brother, William L. “Butch” Kyler, in addition to her parents. Judy is survived by her husband, Ron; a daughter, Coleen M. Czachowski and her husband, Mark, of Pittsburgh; a son, Chris K. Fetcho and his wife, Sheree, of Washington, (Pa); four grandchildren: Elizabeth and Erica Czachowski, both of Pittsburgh, Nathan Fetcho and his wife, Taylor, of Cannonsburg and Kyle Fetcho, of Washington,(Pa); one great-grandchild, Coast Fetcho, of Cannonsburg; and numerous other extended family members. A private memorial service will be held at the convenience of the family. Inurnment: Garden of Angels Mausoleum at Calvary Cemetery, Altoona.

Lucille M. Sherry

Lucille M. Sherry, 79, of R.D. Ebensburg, died October 28, 2024, at Conemaugh Miners Medical Center, Hastings.

She was born May 2, 1945, in Dysart, daughter of the late Herman and Leanore (Ivory) Link. She married Edwin Sherry on June 25, 1966, in St. Augustine, he passed away November 22, 2022., also preceded in death by son, Mark “Pork”, granddaughter Rebecca Anne Sherry, sister Verna Sherry, and brother Sherman Link. Survived by children: Pat (Sandy McMullen), Donna (Kenneth) Sherry, Brenda (Mike) Nealen, Cindy (Randy) Lanzendorfer, Kathleen (Chuck) Dumm, Michael (Jennifer Kirsch) and Amanda (Tim) Horvath, daughter-in-law, Sherri Sherry, 28 grandchildren, numerous great grandchildren with several on the way, sisters and brothers: Joyce Sherry, Russ Link, Patty Miller, and Steve Link, and her dog Sophie. Lucille was proud of her family, she enjoyed gardening, canning, and crocheting. Member of St. Nicholas Catholic Church, Nicktown, where a funeral Mass was celebrated, Rev. Michael Gabler OSB, Celebrant. Committal: St. Nicholas Cemetery.

Jack E. Delozier

Jack E. Delozier, 76, a resident of Cedarwood Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center, Tyrone, died October 29, 2024, at the center.

He was born April 11, 1948, in Altoona, son of the late Walter and Frances (Lynch) Delozier. Preceded in death by infant sisters: Bertha and Leona, brothers and sisters: Walter, Margaret Clouse, Glenn, Delores Gesser, Louis, Donald, Paul, Maury “Butch”, Kenneth, and Wayne. Survived by brother, Jay (Fran McKnight), sisters-in-law Beverly (Luke) Delozier, and Gloria (Culley) Delozier. Also survived by numerous nieces and nephews. Jack enjoyed walking. At the request of the deceased there was no viewing or visitation.

Barb Burkhart

Barb Burkhart, 81, of St. Boniface, died November 2, 2024, at Maybrook Hills Health and Rehabilitation Center, Altoona.

She was born March 11, 1943, in Colver, daughter of the late George and Bertha (Mundock) Motel. Survived by husband of 55 years, Ronald Burkhart Sr. whom she married September 20, 1969, at St. John’s Byzantine Church, Barnesboro, son, Ronald Jr. of Hastings, granddaughter, Bella Burkhart (Patrick), 2 great grandchildren: Grayson and Kaelyn, sister of; George (Mary Ann Holtz), Joanne (Bob) Scaramozzino, and Robert Motel. Also survived by numerous nieces and nephews. Barb enjoyed spending time with her family, line dancing, her dogs and sitting on the porch. She had worked for the Elder Township Water Authority for a number of years. Member of Queen of Peace Catholic Church, Patton. At the request of the deceased there was no viewing. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Ann Hertzog-Repine

Ann Hertzog-Repine, 56, Northern Cambria, formerly of Gallitzin, died October 31, 2024, at UPMC Altoona.

Born March 17, 1968, in Altoona, the daughter of Mark and Theresa (Kaza) Hertzog. Preceded in death by her father Mark. Survived by her husband Scott, whom she married April 19, 1997, and children, Christopher and Yolanda Gardner, sisters, Sharon Hertzog (Allan) and her children Madison and sister Renee (Chad) Wolfe and their children, Katelynn, Davin and Shane, and step-sister, Kaylee Williams, aunts and uncles, Judine Hertzog, Gayle Achuff, Leah (Bob) Maher, and Eric Hertzog, step mother Edith Hertzog, step siblings, Marci and Jason Bender, honorary daughter Courtney Toyama, and her children Ivybeth, Rebecca, Nova and Loki and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Ann enjoyed her family, helping people and secretary of Tricounty ATV Club. A funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Demetrius Catholic Church, Gallitzin, the Rev. Albert Ledoux, celebrant. Committal: St. Patrick Cemetery.

Ann Margret (Peggy Richardson) Murawski

Ann Margret (Peggy Richardson) Murawski, of Ginter, passed away peacefully of Cancer on October 24, 2024, at Embassy of Hearthside, State College Pennsylvania.

She was born November 3,1940 in Philipsburg, Pa. the daughter of the late Harry and Susanna (Kokal) Richardson. On November 12, 1966 she married William Murawski, who preceded her in death February 14, 2023. In addition to her parents and husband, Peggy was preceded in death by a brother Thomas and her stepfather Joseph Stasko, Jr. Peggy owned and operated her beauty shop “Ann’s Salon” in Ginter helping women and men look their best for over 50 years! She would travel throughout the state just to keep up on the latest techniques. She was very active in and around her community whether it be at the local high school football games on Friday nights or at her church, Holy Trinity Church, Ramey. Peggy spent many years as a volunteer with the American Cancer society as well as a participant in many clubs that give back to those in need, such as the Lions Club, BPW, Professional Hairdressers, Project Santa and many other organizations. She was always willing to help those around her. Anyone that knew Peggy knew that she loved the Miami Dolphins, specifically Dan Marino, and the Atlanta Braves. She was particularly good at passing the time crocheting or knitting, and making flower arrangements, but her favorite pastime was spending Saturdays shopping in Altoona with her sister Toni. Peggy will be deeply missed by everyone she touched but especially by those surviving her which include, her sister Toni Krupa, nieces Sue-Ann Krupa and Tami Biafore, and nephew Mike Krupa III and wife Beth. A Funeral Mass was held at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Ramey.

Kathryn L. Baker

Kathryn L. Baker, 81, of Cresson, died November 3, 2024, at home.

She was born October 25, 1943, in Hastings, daughter of the late Bernard and Mildred (Burkey) Thomas. Preceded in death by husband, Martin on April 14, 2021, grandson, Jimmy Yohn (killed in action during the Iraq war), son-in-law, Robert Fisher, and sister, Rosemary. Survived by children: Bernard “Butch” (Michelle Boyer), Julia Fisher, Patrick (Debbie Holliday), and Deneen (Dewey) Noland, numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren, sister of: Larry, Ron, Whitey, Rege, Marilyn, Patty, Judy, Shirley, and Dick. Also survived by numerous nieces and nephews. Kathryn enjoyed going to church bingo. She was a member of the Legion of Mary and St. Aloysius Catholic Church, Cresson, where a funeral Mass was celebrated, Rev. Leo Arnone, Celebrant. Committal: St. Boniface Cemetery.

Robert A. “Bobby” Gresh

Robert A. “Bobby” Gresh, 62, of Smithmill, passed away October 30, 2024 at Midtown Oaks Health and Rehab Center, Altoona.

He was born on July 5, 1962 in Philipsburg, PA, a son of the late David J. and Stella (Evanchuck) Gresh. He graduated from Moshannon Valley High School, was a member of the Janesville VFW, and participated in Special Olympics. He was an avid sports fan, especially the Pirates, Steelers, and Penn State. He was a member of St. Mary’s Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ramey, where he served as an altar boy in his youth. In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by two brothers, Ronald D. Gresh and David E. Gresh. He is survived by numerous nieces and nephews. Interment: St. Mary’s Ukrainian Catholic Church cemetery.

John N. “Pops” Walter

John N. “Pops” Walter, 75 of Bellefonte and formerly of Grassflat, PA died peacefully in State College PA on Friday, October 25, 2024 surrounded by his family.

Born on June 2, 1949 in Altoona, PA, he was the son of Harry P. and Mary (Nicholson) Walter. John was a 1967 graduate of Hollidaysburg High School, Hollidaysburg, PA. In 1975 in Roaring Spring, PA, he married the love of his life, his Indian Princess, the former Gloria Jean Dodson. Together they raised their two sons, John “Johny” and Todd. John was a member of Lance Free Angelical Church, Lance, PA. John was owner and operator of J & J Automotive, Saxton, PA and also worked as a State Farm Automotive Claims Adjuster in the Clearfield office. He loved Classic and Hot Rod cars. John was a talented woodworker and known to be able to fix anything presented to him. He enjoyed camping with his family at Prince Gallitzin State Park, and various beaches. He lived for his grandchildren and great-grandchildren and enjoyed bumming around with the family. He will be truly missed by all those who knew and loved him. John is survived by his sons, Johnny Walter and his wife, Kristen of Paw Paw, West Virginia, M. Todd Walter and his wife, Bonnie of Bellefonte; four grandchildren, Kyle Walter, Cody “Coyote” Walter, Dylan Walter, Sy “Sy Bones” Walter; two great-grandchildren, Iris and James; and great-grandpups, Mia, Freya, and Fina; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was the last of his generation. John is preceded in death by his parents, his wife Gloria, and two brothers, Robert and David Walter. A Celebration of Life honoring John will be held at a later date.

Gary Lee Knepp

Gary Lee Knepp, 65, of Clearfield, passed away Monday, October 28, 2024 at his home.

Born July 27, 1959 in Philipsburg, the son of David and Shirley (Quick) Knepp of Clearfield. He was a graduate of Clearfield Area High School. Mr. Knepp was a Mechanic Technician, having worked for various companies. He was Protestant by Faith. Mr. Knepp was a loving father and grandfather who had a big heart and would help anybody and loved his beloved pets. He enjoyed the outdoors, hunting and fishing and liked sports, especially Penn State and Steeler Football and had coached little league and various all-star teams. He was also a good drummer, having played in various bands. Gary is survived by his parents, his wife, Tina L. (Shoemaker) Knepp whom he married September 22, 1979, three sons; Gary D. Knepp and companion Jill Butler, Gregory A. Knepp and companion Jennifer Williams and Tyler W. Knepp and his wife Ashley E., all of Clearfield and five grandchildren; Carter, Kylie, Aubree, Ryllyn and Camden. Interment: Philipsburg Cemetery.

Kemberly Jo Duckett

Kemberly Jo Duckett, 71, of Clearfield, passed away Sunday, October 27, 2024 at Magee Women’s Hospital, Pittsburgh.

Born July 17, 1953 in Clearfield, the daughter of Stephen J. and Carolyn Bea (Wright) Kovall. She was a graduate with honors of Curwensville Area High School, Class of 1971 and the Clearfield Hospital School of Radiology, Class of 1973. Kem had been employed as a Registered X-ray Technician at Philipsburg, DuBois and Clearfield Hospitals. She attended the St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church of Clearfield and was a past member of the choir as well as the Rosary and Altar Society. Kem had a great interest in the fine arts. She was a talented artist, always gifting her artwork to loved ones to forever treasure. She was musically inclined, singing in the church and school choirs from a young age. She was also an experienced Karate instructor, receiving her 5th Degree Black Belt. Kem’s greatest role in life was loving and caring for her family—always selfless, putting others first. Kemberly is survived by her husband, Scott A. Duckett whom she married September 19, 1981, two sons; Todd Austin Duckett and Timothy Scott Duckett, both of Clearfield, three grandchildren; Austin Charles, Madison Lynn and Lily Bea Duckett, two siblings; Steve Kovall and his wife Brenda of Clearfield and Barbara Rowles and her husband Lewie of Curwensville, step-mother, Anne Kovall of Gettysburg, step-sister, Elizabeth Blake and husband Mark of Gettysburg, her Goddaughter and niece Shannon Rowles Hepfer, great-nephew and Godson Hayes Hepfer and special nieces and nephews; Tiffanie Erin Kovall Cortazzo of State College, Eric Kovall of Clearfield and Joe Davis of Indiana, PA as well as numerous nieces, nephews and brothers and sisters-in-law. She was preceded in death by her parents. Funeral Services were held at the Bennett and Houser Funeral Home, Inc. of Clearfield with Jim Kane officiating. Interment: Bradford Cemetery.

Alton C. Lender

Alton C. Lender, 84, of Monroe Township, NJ, formerly of Clearfield, PA died on Monday, October 28, 2024 at Autumn Lake Nursing Home in Old Bridge, NJ.

Born on August 22, 1940, in Sanborn Rural Houtzdale, PA. Alton was the son of the late Edward Lender & Wava (Brickley) Lender. He married Florence K. (Ralston) Lender on June 13, 1959 in New Jersey. Florence survives at home. Alton was a member of the Hyde Wesleyan Church. He was a Marine Corp Veteran. He was a retired mechanic for National Can in New Jersey. In addition to his parents, Alton was preceded in death by two sisters, Carol Gunter and Janet Wardman; two brothers, Albert Lee Lender and Eugene Lender. In addition to his wife, Alton is survived by a son, Alton Lee Lender of Monroe Township, NJ; two sisters, Delores Ralston & her husband Rueben of Sanborn, Rural Houtzdale, PA, and Cathy Molta & her husband Thomas of Buckley, Washington; two brothers, Darold Lender & his wife Carolyn of Sanborn, Rural Houtzdale, PA, and Kenneth Lender of Sanborn, Rural Houtzdale, PA; and two grandsons, Cody L. Lender and Tyler Dakota Lender; and two great granddaughters, Lilith Rose Lender and Freya Scarlett Lender. At Alton’s request, there was no viewing or services. Burial: Sanborn Cemetery in Rural Houtzdale.

**Obituaries Courtesy of Reed Funeral Home; Heath’s Funeral Home;
Bennett & Houser Funeral Home, Inc;
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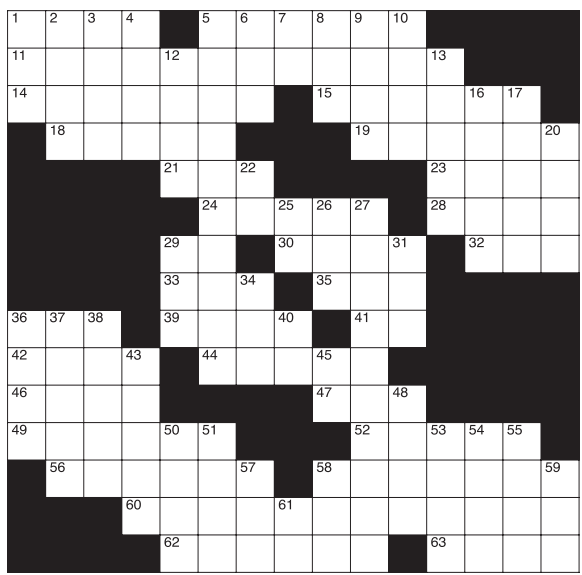
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Crossword Puzzle

Solution on page 6



CLUES ACROSS

1. Absence of effort
5. Preserve a dead body
11. Gratitude
14. The act of coming together again
15. Simpler
18. Visionaries
19. Large, fish-eating bird
21. Indicates near
23. Former CIA agent and critic
24. Icelandic poems
28. Pop
29. "Hammer" is one
30. Senses of self-importance
32. Thyrotrophic hormone
33. Not around

35. Electronic data processing
36. Licenses and passports are two types
39. Snake-like fish
41. Air Force
42. Popular computers
44. Of a withered nature
46. Wings
47. Used in combination
49. Laid back
52. Jeweled headdress
56. In slow tempo
58. ___ Falls
60. Assertions made again
62. Periods of history
63. Hyphen

CLUES DOWN

1. Body part
2. Mimics
3. Expel large quantities rapidly
4. Sea eagle
5. A type of subdivision
6. Variety of Chinese
7. Mr. T's name on "The A-Team"
8. Consumed
9. Chinese dynasty
10. NFL great Randy
12. Ireland
13. Palm trees with creeping roots
16. Fungal disease
17. Impressionable persons
20. Affirmative! (slang)
22. Instinctive part of the mind
25. "The First State"
26. A way to develop
27. Fraternities
29. Woman (French)

31. Sunscreen rating
34. Beer
36. Spiritual leader
37. Indigo bush
38. Burn with a hot liquid
40. Junior's father
43. Ray-finned fishes
45. Morning
48. Line passing side to side through the center (abbr.)
50. Double curve
51. A small bundle of straw or hay
53. Got older
54. Crater on Mars
55. Humanities
57. Relating to the ears
58. "To the ___ degree..."
59. Residue of a burned product
61. It cools a home

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Paws & Claws

Travel with your pet the smart way

Individuals often view their pets as extended members of the family. People want to bring their pets along on vacations or while traveling to visit family and friends. Until recently, it was more difficult to travel with dogs and cats. But as more and more hotel chains recognize the strong connection between people and pets, those chains are growing increasingly flexible in hosting four-legged guests. For those who will be traveling with pets, there is a right and wrong way to do so. Having a plan of action is essential to safeguard the safety and comfort of all involved. Follow these tips to ensure everyone enjoys their R&R as much as possible.

Establish the travel method and route in advance. Go online or scour travel maps to determine the best route to your destination. Depending on the length of travel, layovers may be needed to sleep, refuel and simply stretch the legs. Determine which areas will be safe for walking a dog roadside, and look for rest stops with areas to exercise pets. Experimenting with different routes virtually also enables travelers to choose the most direct, most scenic or another route that fits with their travel plans. Some GPS devices can also alert to lodging and traffic conditions.

Stock up on supplies. Much as parents would bring along essentials while traveling with children, the same concept should be applied when traveling with a pet. Be sure to pack food, treats, toys, bedding, and any of the other creature comforts from home. It also may be a good idea to bring along a recent copy of the pet's immunization records to ensure that he or she is up to date on all shots. Bringing records can also serve as a safeguard if the pet needs to be seen by a veterinarian while away from home.

Contact pet-friendly hotels. Many hotels allow guests to bring along a pet, provided a security deposit is given. Some may have requirements, such as the dog must be caged at night or when left alone in the room. Some pet-friendly hotels can also recommend restaurants that allow leashed dogs. Purchase bottled water. While on the road, take the time to give pets the opportunity to drink water to stay hydrated. Keep in mind that once a pet grows acclimated to a certain type of water at home, a change in that water may cause temporary digestive upset. To avoid accidents or discomfort, travelers may want to bring water from home or purchase bottled water.

Travel safely. When a cat or dog is riding along in a car, it is always best to have the pet restrained. This protects the animal in the event of an accident and also protects the other occupants of the car from injury. Pet seat belts or harnesses can be used. For motorists with SUVs, there are pet gates that can be installed to keep the animal secure in the back part of the vehicle.

Traveling with pets can be an enjoyable experience if proper precautions and planning go into the trip. Be sure to heed the requirements of the establishment where the family will be residing, and inquire as to the pet laws of cities, towns and provinces to act in a responsible manner when out exploring.



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SEASON: Expansion will cost \$3.5M

(Continued from Page 1)

be — it won't be euthanized. One dog stayed at the shelter for more than five years and was unadoptable because of aggressive nature that severely injured two people.

Felton is tasked with connecting with individuals and businesses in the area to sponsor fundraising events to raise money for shelter operating costs. When the shelter advertises an event or campaign, a sponsor has paid for the billboard or ad. Donations earmarked for the animals' care aren't used.

In addition to rising maintenance and utility costs, there's been an ever-rising demand to care for pets surrendered by owners, found as strays, or discovered neglected and ill in pet hoarding circumstances. The constant demand outpaces the shelter's physical capacity.

"Being a no-kill shelter is part of the reason we are bursting at the seams. Being a no-kill shelter means unadoptable animals stay for their entire life," she explained.

Shelter Manager Dylan Kotrick said the

shelter faces criticism for its limited capacity from those who call seeking to surrender a pet.

"We're only allowed so many animals and animals must be in a crate that is compatible with its size. We can't put a 70-pound dog in a crate that's for a Jack Russell."

When police discover a pet hoarding situation, the shelter responds as it did when 96 ill and neglected animals were discovered earlier this year. Hoarding situations are becoming more and more common and each incident strains already stretched resources, officials said. The hoarded animals suffer from neglect and have many health problems so with two large hoarding responses, veterinary bills are expected to exceed the budgeted \$400,000 by an additional \$50,000 to \$100,000, Felton said.

The shelter receives on average three calls a day from owners who can no longer care for their pet. A record high of 22 surrender calls from dog owners occurred in one day this year. The reasons vary but surrenders are most often caused by the owner moving into a new living situation that doesn't allow pets, Kotrick explained. The shelter also receives

about five calls a day from cat owners wishing to surrender their pets and many more calls about stray animals that are found wandering.

To provide care — vaccines, microchipping, neutering and food — for one dog costs an average of \$300 per month, Kotrick said. It costs on average \$170 to prepare a cat for adoption and feed it for a month.

The shelter is planning for a new, larger facility that would help it better meet the community's needs. However, the build is expected to exceed \$3.5 million. The new shelter would increase dog capacity from 48 to 78.

"It's a big difference in how we can help our community and our animals," Felton said.

"We do our best with what we've got," Kotrick said, noting that more and more often that isn't enough. "The new shelter, designed to be more functional, will help us make more of a difference."

While an anonymous donor generously provided the land for a new shelter, the organization doesn't have the cash to start to build, Felton said.

"People want to know that the money they give is going to help the animals. Everything we do is for the animals," she said. The four-member paid staff is assisted by 13 part timers. "You don't get rich working here. The people who work here are here because they love the animals."

"The people who work here are here because they love the animals. Everything we do is for the animals"



Mirror photo by Patrick Waksmunski

Past Season of Sharing recipients:

- 2005 - U.S. Armed Forces Mothers
- 2006 - Brian Morden Foundation
- 2007 - Shriners Hospitals for Children
- 2008 - Gloria Gates Foundation
- 2009 - Food for Families Soup Kitchen
- 2010 - Zack Hinich Foundation
- 2011 - Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County
- 2012 - Home Nursing Agency's Healing Patch
- 2013 - The Miracle League of Blair County
- 2014 - Mountain Lion Backpack Program
- 2015 - Family Services Teen Center & Shelter
- 2016 - Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services
- 2017 - Hurricane relief
- 2018 - Blair County Suicide Prevention Task Force
- 2019 - Skills Of Central PA
- 2020 - Altoona Food Bank
- 2021 - Blair County Library System
- 2022 - St. Vincent DePaul Assumption Chapel Food Pantry
- 2023 - Sweat for Vets
- 2024 - Central PA Humane Society



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Mirror photo by Patrick Waksmunski

Everything we do is for the animals," she said. Those wishing to donate to the Central PA Humane Society through the Mirror's Season of Sharing, should use the form on Page 7. For convenience, a self-addressed envelope has also been inserted into this edition of the Ad Bargain or those making a donation may use their own envelope.

Mirror Staff Writer
Patt Keith can be reached at 814-949-7030.

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1 "Medicare & You," Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2024. 2 "Aging changes in teeth and gums", medlineplus.gov, 4/17/2022. 3 American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, 2020 Survey of Dental Fees, Copyright 2020, American Dental Association.

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2024 SEASON OF SHARING RECIPIENT: Central PA Humane Society



Mirror photos by Patrick Waksmundski
Top left: A kitten peeks through the cage bars. Top right: The laundry room.
Bottom: Volunteer coordinator Kristina Daversa holds “Heidi”.

HISTORY: The Altoona Mirror Season of Sharing is a holiday fundraiser that aims to combine the power of the local newspaper, the expertise of the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation and the generosity of our central Pennsylvania readers.

Season of Sharing has become a holiday tradition, and the money raised benefits a specific charity or charities each year.

Over the past 19 years, Season of Sharing has raised more than \$394,266 for local charities, with last year’s total of \$18,012 to Sweat For Vets.

PAST RECIPIENTS:

- 2005 U.S. Armed Forces Mothers
- 2006 Brian Morden Foundation
- 2007 Shriners Hospitals for Children
- 2008 Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation
- 2009 Food for Families Soup Kitchen
- 2010 Zack Hinish Foundation
- 2011 Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County
- 2012 Home Nursing Agency’s Healing Patch
- 2013 Miracle League of Blair County
- 2014 Mountain Lion Backpack Program
- 2015 Family Services Teen Center & Shelter
- 2016 Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services

2017 Hurricane Relief (Florida Keys, Houston, Puerto Rico)

2018 Blair County Suicide Prevention Task Force

2019 Skills Of Central PA

2020 Altoona Food Bank

2021 Blair County Library System

2022 St. Vincent De Paul Assumption Chapel Food Pantry

2023 Sweat For Vets

THIS YEAR’S RECIPIENT: The Central PA Humane Society (CPHS), serving Blair and surrounding counties in central Pennsylvania, is a charitable, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to helping animals and people.

The primary goal of CPHS is to find loving homes for adoptable animals.

Our adoption programs, our outreach to rescue groups, and our use of foster care have created a flow of animals in and out of our shelter that, more often than not, leaves us with space available. CPHS won’t euthanize for an illness that can be treated, behavior that can be modified, or for a length of stay, providing there is quality of life for the pet.

We need the support of our community because there are more animals than there are homes available and the cost of providing

shelter and medical care is staggering. The Central PA Humane Society receives little or no governmental support and depends almost entirely on the community and its generosity.

HOW TO DONATE: The first and easiest way is to fill out the coupon below and mail it along with an envelope to the address listed below.

You can also drop off the coupon and your contribution at the Altoona Mirror, 301 Cayuga Ave., Altoona PA 16602.

The funds raised through the Season of Sharing will be administered by the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation.

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Deadline for donations is Jan. 31, 2025.

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GRILLE: Renovations are currently in progress

(Continued from Page 1)

Bigmamasauce.com. Unable to find exactly what they were craving, they created their own.

Marissa explained they have been looking for an opportunity to expand their business. This also gives them a chance to bring something new to Clearfield.

Renovations are currently in progress, but they hope to be open by the first of next year.

Stephanie said they will start out slow with evening hours for diners and the possibility of specialty coffees.

The Gunpowder Grille will feature their wings and sauces but they hope to put a different twist on favorite dishes. Other possibilities for the restaurant include special authentic Mexican and Italian food nights.

Bernie pointed out that their food truck often has a long line with people willing to wait for their delicious fresh food. They hope this business will see the same kind of success.

What exactly the restaurant will be is still in the works.

"We want input from the community on what they are looking for and what hours work for them," Marissa said.

Right now they expect to offer wings, specialty burgers, wraps, subs, salads, soup and other

home cooked options. The plan is to do soft openings with special invitations to determine what people want.

"We are hoping the community will respond to us."

One thing they are sure of is, "we will offer consistently great food and service," Marissa said.

The name, Gunpowder Grille, pulls together both their brands. It is also a callback to Marissa's family's Musket Café in Ramey.

In addition to the restaurant, Bob's has also expanded with a clothing outlet store at the Clearfield Square (Clearfield Mall).

Initially, they hoped to purchase the old Laurel Eye Clinic building next to Bob's for the clothing store, but it was too expensive. Dan stated that their lease at Clearfield Square is only for three years, and after that he still wants to move that business downtown.

His plan is to connect the three buildings and have an entrance in the rear.

Dan's path to Downtown Clearfield began when he was young and his family would travel from Bradford to Clearfield, just to go to Bob's.

People still continue to travel from throughout the state to shop at the store.

"Every weekend we have people coming in who say they can't believe we opened back up." They praise the family for keeping many of the business's quirks such as the squeaky floor.

It has been a year since Dan and Stephanie along with her sons, Andrew and Cody Reed re-opened Bob's after Dan who was working in the area, discovered the business had closed when he went shopping for boots.

Seeing a need, his family began tossing around the idea of opening a store. While Andrew was in the area in February 2023, he got a tour from the realtor.

"We ended up signing the papers to buy it shortly after that," Stephanie said.

The former owners, the Grimminger family were very helpful, allowing them to take over not only the name of the business, but their Facebook page and phone number.

"We were able to get a majority of the staff to come back," Stephanie said, adding that they couldn't have done it, without them.

Currently they are busy preparing for hunting season and big Black Friday sale. Watch their Facebook page for details. And follow the Gunpowder Grille page for updates on the restaurant opening.



The owner's of Bob's Army Navy Store along with the owner's of Big Mamma's Sauces are partnering with a new restaurant in Downtown Clearfield at the former Ethan's Café site. They are hoping to open the Gunpowder Grille in January. From left are Cody Reed, Stephanie Kline, Andrew Reed (in back), and Dan Kline of Bob's Army Navy; and Marissa and Bernie Ralston of Big Mamma's Sauces. (Photo courtesy of Gunpowder Grille)

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Social Security changes coming

What to know about the cost-of-living adjustment in 2025

BY ADRIANA MORGA AND CORA LEWIS
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Tens of millions of older Americans will see an increase in benefits this January when a new cost-of-living adjustment is added to Social Security payments.

The 2.5% raise is intended to help meet higher prices for food, fuel, and other goods and services. The average recipient will see an increase of about \$50 per month, according to agency officials. Social Security recipients received a 3.2% increase in their benefits in 2024, and some retirees are concerned that this year's increase is not big enough to meet their needs.

The Social Security Administration will begin notifying recipients about their new benefit amount by mail starting in early December. Adjusted payments to nearly 7.5 million people receiving Supplemental Security Income will begin on Dec. 31. Supplemental Security Income provides monthly payments to adults and children who have income below specific financial limits and qualify to receive Social Security benefits.

Here's what to keep in mind:

How does it work?

About 72.5 million people, including retirees, disabled people and children, get Social Security benefits.

The program is funded by taxes on income subject to Social Security payroll taxes. The government uses taxes from working people to pay benefits to people who have already retired, people who are disabled, the survivors of workers who have died, and dependents of beneficiaries. In 2025, the Social Security payroll tax will be assessed on the first \$176,100 of income, up from \$168,600 this year.

While the money is used to pay people currently receiving benefits, any unused money goes to the Social Security trust fund. Some of the money in the trust, together with the Social Security contributions of people in the workforce, pays for future benefits.

See **Changes**/Page 2



Associated Press file photo
Emma Morano holds a cake with candles marking 117 years on the day of her birthday, Nov. 29, 2016, in Verbania, Italy.

REACHING THE LIMIT

Researcher says don't expect human life expectancy to grow

BY MIKE STOBBE
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Humanity is hitting the upper limit of life expectancy, according to a new study.

Advances in medical technology and genetic research — not to mention larger numbers of people making it to age 100 — are not translating into marked jumps in lifespan overall, according to researchers who found shrinking longevity increases in countries with the longest-living populations.

“We have to recognize there’s a limit” and perhaps reassess assumptions about when people should retire and how much money they’ll need to live out their lives, said S. Jay Olshansky, a University of Illinois-Chicago researcher who was lead author of the study published recently by the journal *Nature Aging*.

Mark Hayward, a University of Texas researcher not involved in the study, called it “a valuable addition to the mortality literature.”

“We are reaching a plateau” in life expectancy, he agreed. It’s always possible some breakthrough could push survival to greater heights, “but we don’t have that now,” Hayward said.

What is life expectancy?

Life expectancy is an estimate of the average number of years a baby born in a given year might expect to live, assuming death rates at that time hold constant. It is one of the world’s most

important health measures, but it is also imperfect: It is a snapshot estimate that cannot account for deadly pandemics, miracle cures or other unforeseen developments that might kill or save millions of people.

In the new research, Olshansky and his research partners tracked life expectancy estimates for the years 1990 to 2019, drawn from a database administered by the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research. The researchers focused on eight of the places in the world where people live the longest — Australia, France, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Spain and Switzerland.

The U.S. doesn’t even rank in the top 40. But is also was included “because we live here” and because of past, bold estimates that life expectancy in the U.S. might surge dramatically in this century, Olshansky said.

Women continue to live longer than men and life expectancy improvements are still occurring — but at a slowing pace, the researchers found. In 1990, the average amount of improvement was about 2.5 years per decade. In the 2010s, it was 1.5 years — and almost zero in the U.S.

The U.S. is more problematic because it is harder hit by a range of issues that kill people even before they hit old age, including drug overdoses, shootings, obesity and inequities that make it hard for some people to get

sufficient medical care.

But in one calculation, the researchers estimated what would happen in all nine places if all deaths before age 50 were eliminated. The increase at best was still only 1.5 years, Olshansky said.

Eileen Crimmins, a University of Southern California gerontology expert, said in an email that she agrees with the study’s findings. She added: “For me personally, the most important issue is the dismal and declining relative position of the United States.”

Why life expectancy may not be able to rise forever

The study suggests that there’s a limit to how long most people live, and we’ve about hit it, Olshansky said.

“We’re squeezing less and less life out of these life-extending technologies. And the reason is, aging gets in the way,” he said.

It may seem common to hear of a person living to 100 — former U.S. President Jimmy Carter hit that milestone recently. In 2019, a little over 2% of Americans made it to 100, compared with about 5% in Japan and 9% in Hong Kong, Olshansky said.

It’s likely that the ranks of centenarians will grow in the decades ahead, experts say, but that’s because of population growth. The percentage of people hitting 100 will remain limited, likely with fewer than 15% of women and 5% of men making it that long in most countries, Olshansky said.

Apple introduces new hearing aid feature for AirPods Pro



The Associated Press

Product could help people face a problem they’d rather ignore

BY DEVI SHASTRI
The Associated Press

Some Apple AirPods wireless headphones can be used as hearing aids with a new software update available Monday. It’s a high-profile move that experts applaud, even if they only reach a small portion of the millions of Americans with hearing loss.

An estimated 30 million people — 1 in 8 Americans over the

age of 12 — have hearing loss in both ears. Millions would benefit from hearing aids but most have never tried them, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Countless others have tried them, but don’t use them because of cost, poor quality, poor fit, how they look or for other reasons.

Over the past few years, there’s been a push to change that. Two years ago, federal rules changed to allow hearing aids to be sold over-the-counter, a move that many hoped would bring better and cheaper options to patients. And last month, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved

software from Apple that would turn AirPods Pro 2 into hearing aids.

It’s unclear yet whether the rule changed has helped, experts say. But turning AirPods into hearing aids is the kind of creative move advocates had hoped for. Here’s what to know about hearing loss, hearing aids, and Apple’s new option.

Contribution to isolation, dementia, even fall risk

About 15% of Americans report some difficulty hearing.

See **Airpods**/Page 5

WORLD DIABETES DAY

is November 14, 2024

People with diabetes are **twice as likely** to experience hearing loss compared to their peers without diabetes.

Chronic high blood sugar levels can damage the delicate blood vessels and nerves in the inner ear.

Repeated episodes of low blood sugar can **negatively impact the function of the auditory nerves**, leading to hearing difficulties.

Both types of nerve damage, caused by either high or low blood sugar levels, can contribute to hearing loss. Regular hearing checks are essential for people with diabetes to monitor their hearing health.

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Area bodybuilder continues to excel

By GEORGE THOMAS
KATTOUF

For the Mirror

Each year since 2011, Rocco Alianiello, owner of Progressive Martial Arts, celebrates Jake Webb's birthday. Webb, a local strongman and former owner of the Pennsylvania Health Club, better known as Jake's Gym, turned 95 this past October. Many devoted bodybuilders, powerlifters and health enthusiasts attend the event to pay homage to Webb.

Most of the attendees were seniors who were impacted in some way by Webb's guidance. Remarkably, these seniors still have firm handshakes, grip strength, and have maintained muscle mass that is generally lost during the aging process, known as sarcopenia. One senior present during Webb's celebration who has the attributes mentioned above is Paul Kowalski, age 76.

Like many teenage boys in the area, Kowalski didn't have the resources to purchase exercise equipment, however, he had the drive and ingenuity to achieve his goals.

"I started at 15 years old in my backyard lifting two-gallon cement cans with a rusty pipe through it. It was about 40 pounds. Later, my buddy's dad had a pigeon coop. We cleaned it up and made it our workout area called Sugar Shack 1," said Kowalski, who eventually was able to accumulate legitimate weightlifting equipment from friends.

Kowalski was skinny, based upon his own assessment of his physique prior to engaging in weightlifting. This was one of the primary motivators for him to begin training.

"I was leafing through magazines, and there was a Charles Atlas advertisement. I sent for the manual and it gave me enough information to get started," Kowalski said.

His commitment to gaining size and building muscle led to a successful metamorphosis. In 1966 as an 18-year-old, Kowalski won Mr. Teenage Altoona and Mr. Blair County competitions. He went on to accumulate many additional bodybuilding titles including Mr. Central Pennsylvania, Mr. Altoona, and Mr. Hollidaysburg.

"I have ten titles and I'm the only person that has the five area titles," said Kowalski, who also competed outside of Pennsylvania receiving first place titles as best poser.

He continued to enter bodybuilding contests for many years after his initial successes. His last entry was at the age of 41 in the Mr. USA Masters Bodybuilding Competition.

"I didn't place real high in that because I lost density because I was onboard a ship for two weeks right before that event," said Kowalski who served in the Naval Reserves for 23 years.

Kowalski was not only a successful bodybuilder, he also was a member of the



Courtesy photos

Paul Kowalski is a local bodybuilder who achieved a great deal of success both locally and outside of Pennsylvania and has also excelled in Senior Olympics.



Altoona Barbell Club and participated in power and olympic lifting from the ages of 18-24. The club was coached by Jake Webb.

"Jake Webb was a big inspiration for me. He was a mentor and a father figure because my dad died when I was two. So, I really didn't have any kind of figure like him in my life. He was nice about everything and never pushed you, but always challenged you," said Kowalski.

Add softball to Kowalski's list of athletic pursuits. He pitched for local teams beginning in his teens and only hung up his glove at age 61.

"I pitched most of the time and played a lot of other positions too. I could throw semi-fast at about 50 miles an hour," said Kowalski who played on three championship teams.

In his fifties, he pursued Senior Olympics to satisfy his competitive nature. These were local events and Kowalski excelled in the vast majority.

"Swimming, golf, tennis, softball throw and football throw, shot put, javelin, discus and disc golf were

some of my events. The list just goes on. I accumulated about 200 medals and the majority were gold," said Kowalski, who competed for twenty years.

These days, Kowalski continues to push himself to maintain his muscularity and ability to stay fit. He lifts four to six days a week at Planet Fitness. He focuses on developing upper and lower body strength. Lifting is primarily done utilizing machines. He also includes cardiovascular training in his fitness regimen.

Walking is an integral part of his weekly routine, though some might find his chosen foot paths rather unusual.

"I walk four days a week and Calvary Cemetery is my favorite place to hike. I am the fastest person at the cemetery," Kowalski said in jest.

He has never stopped pushing himself to maximize his potential. He prepared to compete at the event held in Jake Webb's honor, though it never came to fruition. He trained for a Farmer's Walk by carrying 75 pounds in each hand for approximately 60 feet. He

didn't start out with that weight but continued to increase the poundage.

With a legacy of training from his youth, Kowalski is concerned about the current state of our children.

"There's a big difference between the kids today and my generation. They don't want to get outside and do activities. Instead they want to stay indoors on their electronics, and it's going to negatively impact on their health," Kowalski said.

Kowalski doesn't take his physical prowess for granted.

"God has granted me the potential for good health and fitness. I am very grateful for everything He's given me," said Kowalski.

George Thomas Kattouf of Altoona is the developer of the website AgelessTimeless.com. If you or someone you know in Blair County is age 50 or older and would be a good candidate for the Fitness Track, email Kattouf at george@agelesstimeless.com. Would you like to know how some of the world's leading experts maintain amazing levels of health and fitness? Tune in to the YouTube channel AgelessTimeless to learn more.

CHANGES: Demographic shifts at play

(Continued from Page 1)

To determine what amount of Social Security you'll receive, the government calculates a percentage of your highest wages from your top 35 years of earning, factoring in when you choose to start receiving benefits.

How is it calculated?

The COLA is calculated according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index, but there are calls to use a different index — one that measures price changes based on the spending patterns of the elderly — like healthcare, food and medicine costs.

The smaller increase for 2025 is because inflation is slowing. That means prices aren't increasing as fast as they were at the height of the COVID pandemic. Recipients got a historically large 8.7% benefit increase in 2023 because of record high inflation.



Associated Press file photo

An elderly couple walks down a hall on Nov. 6, 2015, in Easton.

Is the trust running out of money?

Future problems with the fund have long been predicted, largely because of demographic shifts. As birthrates decline, fewer people

become workers, which results in fewer payments of payroll taxes. Meanwhile, more Baby Boomers are retiring and collecting Social Security.

The annual Social Security and Medicare trustees

report released in May said the program's trust fund will be unable to pay full benefits beginning in 2035. If the trust fund is depleted, the government will be able to pay only 83% of scheduled benefits, the report said.



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So what is a FSBO? A For Sale By Owner property is one which is offered without the assistance of an agent. Perfectly fine, perfectly legal but there are some pitfalls to watch out for if you are thinking of looking at a house offered by the owner.

Some homeowners are not really homeowners, but rather investors who purchase a home for resale. Some investors make their living doing this and are sometimes referred to as 'flippers' – people who buy the home with the intent of flipping it for a profit. Often the seller markets the home themselves without an agent – FSBO.

While you can have a successful transaction with a FSBO, this 'Savvy FSBO' has some advanced knowledge that can have an edge over a first time or unknowledgeable home buyer. Since the market currently favors sellers, buyers are reaching out to these Savvy FSBO sellers who tell the buyers – "NO REALTORS".

In a tight inventory market, the buyers continue and 'go it alone' without their agent – abandoning the help and guidance of a knowledgeable agent, in their quest for that perfect property. The warning signs are there, but the buyers ignore them, or don't realize that they can be at a severe disadvantage.

The Savvy FSBO will often have their own 'contract' and demand that the buyers use their agreement. Buyers know they can utilize our brokerage to write an agreement for a flat fee, but the Savvy FSBO insists on their own agreement. Steps in the process such as a sellers disclosure, inspections and contingencies for mortgage and appraisal could be omitted or overlooked without the aid of an agent. The seller will surely ask for a significant deposit, which will be held by the seller and likely difficult to obtain a refund.

Before signing an agreement with the Savvy FSBO, the buyer should absolutely seek the advice of an attorney or attempt to have us write it up for them. Once an agreement is struck, the buyer will need an attorney if they need any advice. I could tell you many stories of how this ended badly for buyers.

The bottom line - Using a Perry Wellington Realty agent can help you through all of the steps of buying a home and seeing it all the way through the closing.

If you have questions, you can contact me at 814-695-5323 office 934-5246 cell or email at broker@perrywellingtonrealty.com

Adam Conrad Jr. MBA, DREI®, CRB®, SRS®, SRES® e-Pro is the broker/owner of **Perry Wellington Realty**, licensed in PA, Florida, Maryland and WV. Adam is the Owner and Director of Education and owner of **Vintage Real Estate Academy**, real estate school. Adam has lectured in business and entrepreneurship at Pennsylvania State University and other colleges. He hosts a TV Show on CBS affiliate WTJH-HD weekly on Fridays at 1030am. He is also an author and contributor to Inman news.

Adam Conrad Jr. MBA, CRS®, DREI®, CRB®, SRS®, e-Pro is the broker/owner of Perry Wellington Realty, licensed in PA, FL, MD, and WV. Adam is the Owner and Director of Education of Vintage Real Estate Academy real estate school. Adam has lectured in business and entrepreneurship at Pennsylvania State University, Saint Francis University and other colleges. He has a TV Show on CBS affiliate WTJH-HD. "Perry Wellington Real Estate 4.5" airs live weekly on Fridays at 10:30 a.m. He is also an author and contributor to Inman news. Perry Wellington Realty has been the number 1 Brokerage in sales in Allegheny Highlands Association of Realtors for the past 7 years. All statistics courtesy AHAR MLS 1/17-12/31/23.



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Altoona Mirror

Making It Happen For You

Best pill boxes and medication management tools

Dear Savvy Senior,
Can you recommend some good pill boxes and medication reminding devices? I've recently started taking several new prescription medications along with some vitamins I normally take and need to get a pill box that helps me organize them. What can you tell me?

— Almost 70

Dear Almost,
Pill boxes (a.k.a. pill organizers) play an important role in keeping people healthy because they help you stay on top of your medication regimen. While there are many options, here are a few tips to help you choose, along with some top-rated pill boxes as recommended by expert reviewers.



Jim Miller
Savvy Senior

Identify your needs?

When choosing an appropriate pill box for you, you first need to ask yourself a few questions, such as:

How many pills do you take and how big are they? If you take only a few medications, a smaller pill box may be sufficient. But if you're taking multiple medications and large vitamin supplements, you'll want to get a large compartment pill box that can hold your daily dosage. Do you take your pills once a day or multiple times a day? If you take medications only once a day, a simple pill box with one compartment will do. But if you need to take med-

ications multiple times a day, you'll want to get a pill box with either two, three or four compartments for each day of the week. Do you have problems remembering to take your medications? If so, there are organizers that have built-in alarms and reminding features, or you can download a free medication reminding app on your smartphone. Do you have a difficult time opening your medication containers? If so, there are easy-open pill boxes or automated medication dispensers that are ideal for those with dexterity problems. Do you need a portable pill box for when you're away from home? There are smaller portable pill boxes made for traveling, some of which have sealed-shut cases that prevent moisture and dust from entering.

Best pill boxes
With help from The New York Times (Wirecutter) and USA Today (Reviewed), some of the best pill boxes in 2024 are offered by Auvon and Sukuos which make a variety of single and multiple compartment pill organizers that are big, colorful and easy to open. Their top-rated options include the "Auvon Weekly Pill Organizer" for once-a-day medication users; "Sukuos AM/PM Weekly 7 Day Pill Organizer" for twice a day use; "Auvon iMedassist Moisture-Proof Weekly Pill Organizer" for four times a day; and the "Auvon Moistureproof Monthly Pill Organizer" for those who want to organize their medications monthly. Or, if you're interested in a travel pill box, the "MUCHENGbao Travel Pill Organizer" is considered an excellent choice.

All of these pill boxes cost around \$10 and are available on Amazon.com or Walmart.com.

High-tech pill organizers
If you need more help keeping up with your medication regimen, there are smart pill boxes that will organize your pills, remind you to take them, track your progress and even text or email caregivers if pills are missed. A popular option to consider here is EllieGrid (elliegrid.com, \$149), which connects the pill box to the EllieGrid app (via Bluetooth) that you would install on your smartphone. Or if you need even more help, there are automated medication dispensers like the Hero (herohealth.com, \$45 per month), which is a comprehensive, Wi-Fi con-

nected, app-based system that will remind you when to take your pills and dispenses them to you.

Medication reminding apps
If you're interested in a medication reminding app, some top-rated choices include MyTherapy (mytherapyapp.com) or Medisafe (medisafeapp.com). These are free apps that you can download in the Apple or Google Play app stores that will send you timely notifications to take your pills, and remind-ers to refill your prescriptions.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

Fall's a perfect time to plant a tree

These tips can help do it right

By JESSICA DAMIANO
The Associated Press

If you've been pining to plant a tree, now is a great time. The season's cooling temperatures and still-warm soil mean less stress on newly planted trees, which allows them to direct more energy into growing strong roots rather than struggling to survive the heat and drought often seen in summer. And, because the trees are preparing for dormancy, that energy doesn't have to be shared with root and flower growth. Since planting a tree is a long-term investment, it's important to get it right, and that will require a bit of research. For starters, choose the right tree. Yes, this means selecting a tree that will make you happy, but it also means taking your hardiness zone, soil type, sunlight

exposure and natural moisture levels into consideration. The tree's mature size is important, too, lest it grow into overhead electrical wires, eaves or other overhangs, or its roots grow to interfere with underground utilities. When digging a hole, make it twice as wide as the tree's root ball and exactly as deep. Then remove the tree from its container and place it in the center of the hole, taking care to support it under its roots rather than holding it by the trunk. Evaluate its depth. It should land level with the ground around it so that when planted, all the roots are covered with soil, but the flare where the bottom of the trunk attaches to them is not. If the top of the root ball is too high, remove the tree and dig the hole deeper; if it's too low, add more soil to the bottom of the hole, tamp it firmly and check again. If your new tree came balled-and-burlapped rath-

er than in a container, that means it was grown in a field and dug up for sale. Although often larger, these trees are more susceptible to transplant shock because their roots are severed in the digging process. Canvas or burlap is tied around the remaining root system to retain soil and prevent the roots from falling apart during transport. Sometimes, roots are enclosed in a wire cage. After you've situated the tree at the proper depth in the hole, cut and remove the twine (or use wire cutters to remove the cage) and cut away as much of the burlap as possible, allowing the portion under the roots to remain; it will gradually decompose without interfering with root growth. (However, if the roots are wrapped in a synthetic material like plastic or vinyl, remove it all.) If the roots appears tightly wound, gently loosen them with a garden fork to allow them to grow outward into

the soil. Next, confirm the tree is straight, then backfill the hole with soil, periodically tamping it down to eliminate air pockets. Never mound soil up against the trunk. Thoroughly moisten the soil with a slow flow of water. Allow the surface to dry for a day or so, then add 2 inches of compost or well-rotted manure, topped with 2 inches of wood chips or mulch, over the soil, extending at least as far as the branches extend overhead. Push those materials 4 inches away from the trunk (never mound soil, amendments or mulch up against trunks "volcano" style; the practice slowly kills trees). Water your new tree regularly during its first 12 months, especially during hot and dry spells. Then, familiarize yourself with the species' requirements. Some tree types will need supplemental watering throughout their lives, but others will not.

Important tips you will need when choosing hospice facilities

Hospice programs are designed to provide care to those facing end-of-life illnesses and offer support for such individuals' families and caregivers. The hospice philosophy is a relatively recent one, at least in the United States. According to Harvard Medical School, in the 1970s a growing number of terminally ill people were dying alone in hospitals. In response to that, the hospice movement began to offer services that would enable individuals to die free of pain and with dignity. Resources were available to families facing tough decisions. Hospice is fully covered by Medicare in the United States for all eligible patients and is covered by most Medicaid and commercial insurance plans. Canada has universal health care, which provides

basic health services without user fees. ■ Start with a state or national website. This enables families to filter their options by provider type as well as geographic location. ■ Determine the care outcome. You can decide which type of services will be needed for your loved one. Hospice programs can manage pain and symptoms; provide drugs, medical supplies and equipment; teach family members how to care for loved ones; help with emotional and spiritual aspects of death; and provide services like speech and physical therapy. Identifying the desired course of hospice treatment ensures families ask the right questions when visiting facilities. ■ Know the screening requirements. Ask about the qualifications of hospice

workers and volunteers as well as the level and type of training they receive before being placed with families. ■ Determine caseload and how busy the hospice provider may be. Some hospices assign a certain number of patients to each staff member, while others offer only one-on-one assignments. This can affect how flexible scheduling may be. ■ Where does care take place? Hospice services may occur in hospitals, skilled nursing homes, private residences, or specialized hospice centers. Identify which scenario works for you and find services that align with it. ■ Learn the reputation and read reviews of hospice providers. It may be easy to go with an initial recommendation, particularly when you want to offer fast relief to a loved one.

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At 94, Eastwood not slowing down

‘Juror #2’ cast still can’t believe they got to work with film icon

By LINDSEY BAHR
The Associated Press

Nicholas Hoult was certain someone had made a mistake.

Clint Eastwood wanted to talk to him about starring his new film, a slow burn legal thriller about a normal guy faced with an extraordinary moral dilemma. Surely Eastwood meant someone else, he thought. But soon enough they were chatting on the phone about “Juror #2,” opening in theaters Friday.

“I was so nervous,” the British actor said. “I remember saying to him, ‘I really like the script.’ I was so eager to please.”

For Eastwood’s comeback, Hoult slipped into a pitch-perfect impersonation of his gravelly voice: “If you like it so much, I guess I’ll have to read it.”

Suddenly Hoult was laughing. The tension was broken.

“I was like, wow this guy’s cool,” he said. “He’s got a great sense of humor and we’re going to get along.”

Though there may be a healthy amount of English self-deprecation in the story, the spirit of it isn’t unique to Hoult. Eastwood, 94, is the kind of living legend that has even the most



This image released by Warner Bros. Entertainment shows Nicholas Hoult, left, and director Clint Eastwood behind the scenes during production for “Juror #2”.

seasoned veterans a little starstruck. “Juror #2,” his 42nd film behind the camera, is getting strong reviews for being a smart, original courtroom thriller about an impossible conundrum.

In the original script by Jonathan Abrams, Hoult’s character, a recovering alcoholic with his first child about to be born, gets selected for jury duty on a murder case. But when the facts start to emerge, so do his memories and he’s forced to confront the possibility that he might have been unknowingly responsible.

“After the first read it had me,” Eastwood wrote in an email. “It made me think about what would you do if you were put in this situation? What is right? What is wrong? Who would you protect? A true moral dilemma.

That’s something I’d want to watch.”

And he started rounding out his cast, led by Hoult who he called a true “movie star,” with supporting turns from Toni Collette as the ambitious prosecutor, Chris Messina as the public defender, J.K. Simmons as a fellow juror as well as Zoey Deutch and Kiefer Sutherland, who wrote a letter asking if there might be a role for him.

Sutherland had long imagined he’d cross paths with Eastwood. A lifelong Western fan, Sutherland’s late father Donald Sutherland had even worked with Eastwood a few times (“Kelly’s Heroes,” “Space Cowboys”). But when he read about the plans for “Juror #2” he felt a new sense of urgency.

“I always thought one day I would arrive at Mr.

Eastwood’s doorstep. Then I realized that that time was maybe kind of going away,” said Sutherland. “I just said, ‘I’ve always dreamed of working with you and if there is a part, any part, I would just like to be able to have the experience of watching you direct.’”

He was ultimately cast to play a lawyer and an AA sponsor to Hoult’s character. The screen time was relatively small, but the experience exactly what he hoped: A masterclass in the truest sense.

“I’ve worked with people that shout and get angry and they’re very demonstrative,” Sutherland said. “He was so amazingly quiet and calm and soft spoken. That’s someone who has power, when they can be that and get everything they need.”

Much has been made about whether “Juror #2” is going to be Eastwood’s last film. But he’s not saying that, publicly or privately. In fact, when production went on hiatus during the actors strike, he didn’t even use that time as a break.

“I remember when we did come back from the strike, I was like, ‘What did you do? And he was like, ‘Well, I was looking for new material,’” Collette said. “It’s nobody’s position to say this is his last movie.”

Sutherland added: “His parking spot at the Warner Bros. lot isn’t going anywhere.”

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Local plumber places among the top in his trade

Seidel finishes 2nd in national contest

By RACHEL FOOR
rfoor@altoonamirror.com

Those who know Mike Seidel say he is a better person than he is a plumber, which is especially high praise since he came in second place at the 2024 Plumbing National Championships this past September.

“He’s just a good human being,” said James ‘Jimmy’ Riley Jr. Riley is the owner of Riley Plumbing and Heating, Seidel’s employer for the last 25 years. While technically his boss, Riley said Seidel is “like a son” to him.

In 1999, when Seidel graduated from Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology with an associate’s in plumbing technology, he said there weren’t a lot of people hiring.

“Jim Riley (Sr.) brought me in, even though he probably didn’t really need me, and I’ve worked here ever since,” he said.

Finishing what he started

Before Seidel became a master plumber, his uncle, Dave Wendle, said he was a “skinny little kid” with a good work ethic.

“As a matter of fact, his grandfather was a pipe-fitter and boilermaker in Tyrone,” Wendle said.

When asked how he got into plumbing, Seidel said “tinkering with my grandfather,” but admitted to initially not wanting to be a plumber.

“I entered vo-tech in the construction class and was removed because I wouldn’t do a haircut,” said Seidel,

while sporting a bald head. “I had real long hair then.”

Seidel tried electrical but “didn’t really care for it,” then met the plumbing teacher to ask if he cared about long hair.

“He said ‘absolutely not,’” Seidel said. “So, that’s all. I entered (the plumbing program).”

Seidel wasn’t done trying out programs, however. When he took the entrance exam at Thaddeus Stevens, he wanted to be an auto mechanic. While his scores weren’t high enough for their automotive program, they were enough for plumbing.

“I remember asking my instructor if I was going to get anything out of this program or whether I was wasting my time,” Seidel said. “He ... made a comment to me about finishing what I started.”

Seidel said he was there for two days, but took the comment to heart and, if not for that conversation, probably would have dropped.

“My mom always said to me, if I didn’t go to school, I’d be a ditch digger,” Seidel said. “And, to be honest, when I started (at Riley’s), all I did was dig ditches. We spent a lot of time breaking up basement floors and replacing sewer lines. I thought, ‘man, I went to school to do the exact same thing I wasn’t supposed to be doing.’”

Crunching numbers

Seidel had an accelerated apprenticeship due to his schooling and became a master plumber by his late 20s. He had also studied estimating and said Riley Jr. asked him if he’d be interested in doing an estimate for a project.

“It was a job we had already completed, so we knew exactly what it cost,” Seidel said. “I beat (Jim) Sr. by 3 or 4%.”

Seidel’s been doing estimates for about 16 or 17 years at Riley’s, he said, and it remains a friendly competition.

“We are generally close enough that he gets one, I get one,” Riley Jr. said.

Riley said Seidel is an even better person outside of the office by working benefits for cancer research and donating to those in need.

“He doesn’t say too much about it,” Riley said. “You might find out about it, but a lot of stuff he does behind the scenes.”

The feeling goes both



Mirror photo by Patrick Waksmunski

Mike Seidel of Riley Plumbing and Heating was a finalist in the Plumbing National Championships. The event was filmed and will be aired on CBS Sports on Dec. 13.

ways, as Seidel said “the Riley family is one of the nicest families” he had ever met.

“It’s very family-oriented,” Seidel said.

It was actually Riley’s son, Michael Riley, who told Seidel about the Plumbing National Championships.

Making progress

Seidel said 2024 was the second year for the ServiceTitan Elite Trades Championship Series’ plumbing program.

“They’ve done electrical, automotive and even HVAC for years,” Seidel said.

The competition had three rounds, the first of which required completing online testing. The top 20 scores qualified for round two, and the top score automatically progressed to round one. Seidel said they had five minutes to correctly answer as many multiple-choice questions as possible. The most he achieved was 112.

“I would check my score with my oldest daughter, Paisley,” Seidel said. “I just couldn’t get out of number two.”

For round two, Seidel received an at-home kit with a timer and box of fittings. He was asked to film himself building a predetermined assembly and performing a pressure test in 20 minutes. From there, the top five were given an all-expense paid trip to West Palm Beach, Florida, to compete head-to-head with tradespeople.

Just short

During round three, each person in the plumbing championship was given an hour and a

half to complete hooking up a water line, setting a shower valve and adding a hose bib.

“It’s amazing how fast an hour and a half goes in that scenario,” Seidel said. “Especially when I hear that little timer say 30 minutes.”

Seidel admitted the first-place winner was the only person who actually finished the project.

“Maybe if I had another six or seven minutes,” Seidel said with a grin.

While Seidel won \$7,000 for his efforts, what he really wanted was “the shiny thing” — the golden pipe-themed trophy.

“That’s why I entered,” Seidel said. He also mourned the large novelty check he never received because he had

planned to hang it in Riley’s office.

Wendle thought Seidel would come in first because “he puts his heart into everything he does.” He described Seidel as a “jack of all trades” who “deserved a little recognition.”

Seidel “never would have said a word” about placing in the championship if it weren’t for his family spreading the word, Wendle said.

Riley said he also thought Seidel “had a good chance at winning the thing.”

“To come down to one of the top three people — I can’t say enough about him,” Riley said.

When asked if he thought Seidel would compete in the championships again, Riley said yes.

“I will find it hard to believe if he’s not there next year,” Riley said. “He doesn’t want to settle for second best and I think he can do it.”

Mirror Staff Writer Rachel Foer is at 814-946-7458.

On air

The 2024 Plumbing National Championships were filmed and will be aired on CBS Sports. Times have not yet been announced.

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Mike Seidel of Riley Plumbing and Heating was a finalist in the 2024 Plumbing National Championships.

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