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Volume 44
Number 36

Wednesday, February 11, 2026



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Rustic Ridge hosts inaugural Winterfest

'Disneyland of Moshannon Valley' will offer family fun

By Andy Stine
astine@altoonamirror.com

WEST DECATUR — A few years ago, Cen-Clear Child Services approached Mel Curtis, who was the executive director of the Moshannon Valley YMCA at the time, about a farm in Morgan Run.



Mel Curtis, board chairman, Rustic Ridge Farm

"They said, 'We have this farm out here and we really don't do anything with it,'" Curtis said. "'What do you think we could do with it?'"

Curtis' vision became known as Rustic Ridge Farm, which has been in existence for about 2.5 years. He now serves as board chairman of the farm, which sits on more than 450 acres.

State Rep. Glenn Thompson has called the farm, "The Disneyland of Moshannon Valley."



Rustic Ridge will be hosting their inaugural Winterfest on Feb. 28.

"Basically we're going to give families the opportunity to come in and spend time together as a family unit," Curtis said. "That's really the process of what we're trying to accomplish on everything."

Activities planned for the event are still a work in progress, but there will be snow tubing, a large bonfire area, a snowman decorating contest, cross country skiing, an ice rink and hot chocolate.

Kids will also get a chance to see all the animals at the farm, which include miniature goats, cows, chickens, ducks and rabbits.

"We're going to come up with additional ideas," Curtis said. "We work with Penn State parks and rec kids. ... It's the first year we've been doing this. We're baby-stepping through what all we do."

The good news is everything will be free of charge to attendees.

The farm, owned by Cen-Clear Child Services, formed a board of directors that includes three members from Cen-Clear, three members from the Moshannon Valley YMCA, and Curtis as the chairman.

Curtis describes the farm as an educational facility. The company recently put in horse barns, an amphitheater and a stage. Free family movie nights on Fridays, and live music on Sunday afternoons are popular in the summer months.

The farm is only growing in popularity since it opened.

"We did a fall festival out there. We had way over 1,000 people," Curtis said. "We were panicking towards the end try-



— Courtesy photos

Rustic Ridge Farm, 5193 Morgan Run Road, West Decatur, will host a Winterfest on Feb. 28. In addition to winter games, events and hot chocolate, kids and adults alike will have the opportunity to see all the animals at the farm, including miniature goats, cows, chickens, ducks and rabbits.

ing to find parking. We were parking them in the fields. We learned a lesson real quick that we have to expand parking."

Activities that are available at the farm include cornhole, horseshoe pits, volleyball, trails, archery, horseback riding, and mountain biking.

Campsites are also available, and there are now RV sites. Boy scouts have camped there in the past, and the farm plans on building cabins next year.

Future events planned at Rustic Ridge include an Easter egg hunt in April, a music festival in May, and a fall festival in October.

The goal is to teach children about agriculture, and

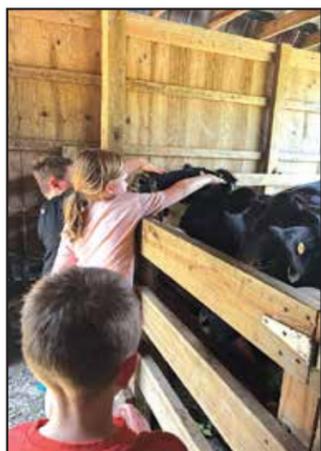


Curtis has been working with the Clearfield County vo-tech school with an interest in starting an agricultural program at the vo-tech, and using the farm as their classrooms.

"That would be phenomenal," Curtis said.

Rustic Ridge Farm is a short drive from Interstates 80 and 99, and anyone is welcome to come visit the farm for free of charge.

"You can do things and not spend a lot of money, and spend quality time with your family," Curtis said. "This is really what this is all about."



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Accounts vary on Valentine's Day origins

Valentine's Day is a bright light in the middle of the winter. Come February 14, sweethearts celebrate their love and affection for one another on this day devoted to happy couples.

The origin of Valentine's Day has generated much speculation over the years. Most early accounts do not point to heart-shaped boxes filled with chocolates. Rather, a few distinctive tales may paint the picture of early Valentine's Day, and they have nothing to do with stuffed animals or romantic dinners.

Roman festival

One of the earliest records of the term Valentine's Day is traced to the Roman festival of Lupercalia, which was a fertility festival. This annual event held on February 15 included animal sacrifices and priests called the Luperci who would take pieces of animal hide and touch it to the foreheads of women in the hopes it would make them more fertile. Fortunately for the squeamish (and the sacrificial animals), Pope Gelasius I ended Lupercalia and replaced it with St. Valentine's Day by the end of the fifth century.



may have been jailed and fell in love with a jailer's daughter while in prison. He purportedly wrote to her, beginning the first Valentine card or letter tradition. Other stories say the imprisoned Valentine actually was writing to a blind woman he

purportedly healed, and signed the note "from your Valentine."

It is hard to know who is who in regard to the name Valentine, as the stories and the people behind them are used interchangeably. Some historians believe they

actually are the same person rather than several Valentines, while others insist there were multiple martyred individuals.

However you slice it, the defiant actions of one or more people named "Valentine" set the course for centuries of romance to follow.

Two or three St. Valentines?

Most people attribute the origins of Valentine's Day to the holiday's namesake, St. Valentine. But it seems that Valentine was the surname of a few different individuals. According to History.com, the Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus. One Valentine was a priest during the reign of Emperor Claudius II, who decided that single men made better soldiers than those with families or wives. Claudius outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine disagreed with the decree and would perform marriages in secret. Others believe it was St. Valentine of Terni, a bishop beheaded by Claudius II outside of Rome, who was the true namesake.

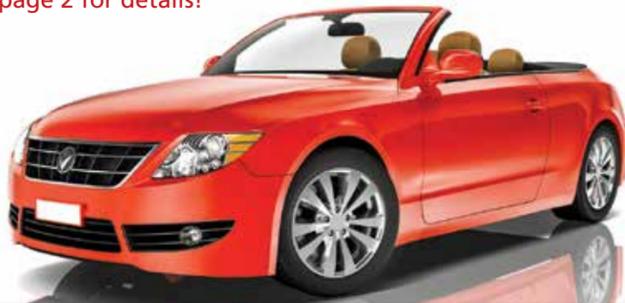
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Paws & Claws

The characteristics of various cat breeds

Cats perch on windowsills and the tops of sofas in many homes across the country. The American Veterinary Medical Association indicated in its U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook (2017-2018) that 25.4 percent of households owned cats, with a total of 58,385,725 cats residing in the United States that year. The Canadian Animal Health Institute says cats continue to outnumber dogs in Canada, where 8.1 million cats were kept as household pets in 2020.

Pet owners understand that there are a variety of dog breeds, each with its own behavior, size and temperament standards. For example, a golden retriever may behave much differently than a toy poodle. The same can be said for cats; cat breeds vary and

each has its own notable characteristics. The following are a few popular cat breeds and what owners can expect if they open their homes to these felines, courtesy of PetHealthZone and Cat Fanciers' association.

- Abyssinian: A popular cat breed, abyssinians are elegant and regal-looking. While affectionate, they tend not to lap cats, but are known for their curiosity and playfulness. These cats come in four different ruddy colors.

- American Bobtail: This cat has a short tail and tufted ears and toes. It resembles the wild bobcat. Some say these cats are dog-like in their personalities. They may enjoy greeting family and some can even be leash-trained.

- Bengal: Bengals look like a wild cat with their spotted coats. They are extremely intelligent and require much energy to stimulate them mentally.

- Burmese: Burmese cats like spending time with their families and bonding with people. They hail from Thailand, although it was rumored the cats were from Burma, and come in American and British variations.

- Devon Rex: With its oversized ears, the Devon Rex can look like a cartoon character. And a character he or she is, preferring to curl up on a warm lap or follow people around the house. The breed also has a hint of mischievousness, so watch out.

- Himalayan: Puffy and beautiful, these cats desire petting and grooming. They were bred by crossing Persian and Siamese cats to produce a striking mix. Himalayans are affectionate, intelligent and extroverted.

- Maine Coon: These cats got their name from the legend that they're a cross between a cat and a racoon. This isn't the case, but Maine Coons are among the largest cat breeds in the world and have fur and tails that resembles a wild racoon's. People-oriented, intelligent and easy-going are some traits associated with this breed.

- Persian: Persians have scrunched faces and silky, flowing coats. They tend to be quiet and gentle, and will offer unconditional love to owners. They can take a while to warm up to new people.

- Siamese: These cats look similar to Burmese, and also hail from Thailand. Brown paws and blue eyes give them a striking look. They're quite talkative and very intelligent.

With scores of cat breeds, people can undoubtedly find felines that fit their lifestyles.



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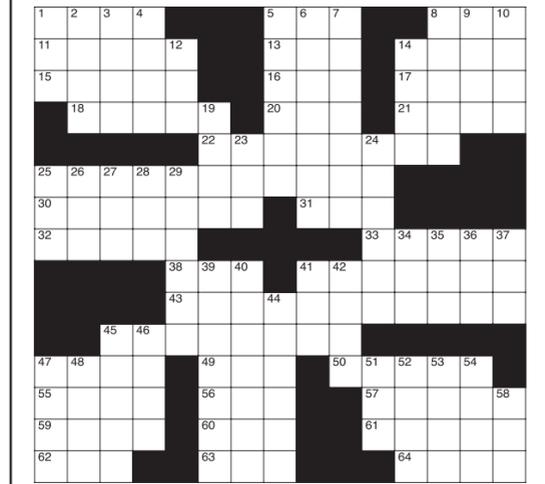
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AD BARGAIN Crossword Puzzle
Solution on page 5



- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Brezed through
 - 5. Consumer protection agency
 - 8. Criminal syndicate
 - 11. Moves back from
 - 13. Satisfaction
 - 14. Feel concern or interest
 - 15. Monetary units
 - 16. Congressman (abbr.)
 - 17. Israeli city
 - 18. Restaurants
 - 20. 2,000 lbs.
 - 21. Grandmother
 - 22. North, South and Central
 - 25. In an early way
 - 30. Foes
 - 31. Social networking platform
 - 32. Early term for basketball player
 - 33. Another name for sesame plant
 - 38. Disallow
 - 41. Provide greater detail
 - 43. Inaccessible
 - 45. Evoke emotions
 - 47. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
 - 49. Celtic punk rockers
 - 50. A fencing sword
 - 55. Actor Idris
 - 56. Affirmative (slang)
 - 57. Afflicted in mind or body
 - 59. One point north of northeast
 - 60. Born of
 - 61. Social media hand gesture
 - 62. Hong Kong food stall __ pai dong
 - 63. Opposite of beginning
 - 64. Email function

- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Sign language
 - 2. Fashionable
 - 3. Borough in Helsinki
 - 4. Inability to hear
 - 5. More quickly
 - 6. An idea accepted as a demonstrable truth
 - 7. Shrewdly
 - 8. Rooney and Kate are two
 - 9. Mediterranean port
 - 10. Benedictine monk
 - 12. Midway between south and southeast
 - 14. Town in Galilee
 - 19. Satisfy
 - 23. Mice genus
 - 24. Brass instrument
 - 25. Chest muscle (slang)
 - 26. Transmits genetic information from DNA
 - 27. Records electric currents generated by the brain
 - 28. Woman (French)
 - 29. Short route aircraft
 - 34. Pitching statistic
 - 35. Pointed end of a pen
 - 36. Popular sports league
 - 37. Body part
 - 39. Inoffensive
 - 40. Yellowish cotton cloth
 - 41. Feline
 - 42. Does not tell the truth
 - 44. Seduced
 - 45. Spiritual leader
 - 46. Abba __, Israeli politician
 - 47. Repair
 - 48. Olive genus
 - 51. Swiss river
 - 52. Prejudice
 - 53. C. European river
 - 54. Keep under control
 - 58. Father

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- '19 Jeep Cherokee - 2.4L, FWD, 135K
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- '17 Lincoln MKX - 3.7L, AWD, 102K
- '17 Subaru Crosstrek - 2.5L, AWD, 117K
- '17 VW Beetle - 1.8L Turbo, FWD, 151K
- '16 Chevy Malibu - 1.5L Turbo, FWD, 75K
- '16 Subaru Forester - 2.5L, AWD, 168K
- '16 Ford Explorer - 3.5L, 4x4, 3rd Row, 162K
- '16 Jeep Patriot - 2.4L, 4x4, 103K
- '16 Nissan Rogue - 2.5L, FWD, 155K
- '16 Hyundai Sonata - 2.4L, FWD, 176K
- '15 Jeep Cherokee - 3.2L, 4x4, 151K
- '15 Chevy Tahoe - 5.3L, 4x4, 116K
- '14 Hyundai Santa Fe - 2.4L, AWD, 113K
- '13 Hyundai Accent - 1.6L, FWD, 133K
- '12 Chevy Cruze - 1.4L Turbo, FWD, 129K
- '12 Jeep Wrangler - 3.6L, 4x4, 135K
- '11 Dodge Ram 1500 - 5.7L, 4x4, 117K

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Obituaries

Carol J. Kephart
Carol J. Kephart, 82, of Philipsburg, PA, died on Monday, February 2, 2026 at her home.
Born on September 16, 1943 in Philipsburg, PA, Carol was the daughter of the late Harry Millard & Louise (Jones) Millard. She married Carl W. Kephart on October 19, 1963 in (Gearhartville) Philipsburg, PA. He preceded her in death on December 4, 2022. Carol was a member of the New Life Center in Philipsburg, PA. She retired from Cen-Clear Child Services in Philipsburg, PA. Carol was a 1961 graduate from the P.O. High School. In addition to her parents and husband, Carol was preceded in death by four sisters, Chrissie Millard, Sharon Schlegel, Lois Sharpless, and Grace Lamb; and three brothers, Merle Millard, Carl Millard, and Wesley Millard. Carol is survived by a daughter, Lee Ann Webster (Scott) of Spring Mills, PA; two sons, Russell Kephart & his wife Dina of Houtzdale, PA and Leslie Kephart & his wife Susan of Charleston, SC; a sister, Sylvia Marko of Osceola Mills, PA; two brothers, Harry Millard of Philipsburg, PA, and Frank Millard & his wife Shirley of Madera, PA; eight grandchildren, Dustin, Christopher, Andrew, Morgan, Carson, Mali, Aaralyn, Brianna; and one great-grandson, Noah. A funeral service was held at the Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services, LLC, at 701 Lingle St. Osceola Mills, PA. with Rev. John Dill officiating. Interment: Centre Cemetery in Osceola Mills, PA.

Michael Edward "Ed" Bem
Michael Edward "Ed" Bem, 92, of Gallitzin, passed away February 8, 2026.
Born September 30, 1933 in Gallitzin, son of the late Stanley and Caroline (Zagata) Bem. He is preceded in death by his wife, Leona M. (Wilt) Bem; brothers Walter, Bernard, Joseph, and Felix Bem; and sisters Edna Message, Tillie Gaida, Mary Adams, Catherine Klisiewicz, Eleanor Fischer, and Dorothy Stock. Survived by children Michael, Jr (Rose) Bem, Joseph "Larry" (Jean) Bem, Richard (Beth) Bem, Kathy (Jeff Harpster) Storm, and Robert (Christine) Bem. Also survived by 12 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren, and 3 great-great-grandchildren. Ed was a U.S. Army veteran, serving in the Korean War. He retired in 1996 from St. Francis University's Maintenance Department. He loved being outside; hunting, fishing, and mowing, still tending to the lawn all the way until last summer. A Funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Demetrius Catholic Church, Gallitzin; Rev. Fr. Albert Ledoux, officiating. Interment: St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery.

Stephen Harry "Buck" Koptchak, Sr.
Stephen Harry "Buck" Koptchak, Sr., 74, of Philipsburg, PA, died on Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at Penn Highlands Clearfield.
Born on October 20, 1951, in Philipsburg, PA, Stephen was the son of the late John & Alice (Kanour) Koptchak. He was a Chester Hill Boro Councilman. Stephen retired from Rushton Mining Co. In addition to his parent, Stephen was preceded in death by a brother, Mitchell Koptchak; and a son-in-law, Steven Holencik. He is survived by two daughters, Jane Ann Fischer & her husband Paul of Osceola Mills, PA, and Amber Holencik of Houtzdale, PA; two sons, Gregory Allen Koptchak of Curwensville, PA, and Stephen Harry Koptchak, Jr. & his wife Luz of Blackstone, VA; four sisters, Edna Jane Brown & her husband Scott of Boalsburg, PA, Julie Powell & her husband Andrew of Ramey, PA, Judy Bair & her husband Gene of Rebersburg, PA, and Joni Whitehead & her husband Timothy of Boalsburg, PA; two brothers, John K. Koptchak of Houtzdale, PA, and Rick L. Koptchak & his wife Debra of Osceola Mills, PA; ten grandchildren, Gregory Koptchak Jr., Elizabeth Koptchak, Alisha Lansberry, Sara Saxon, Carter Fischer, Emilee Holencik, Caitlyn Kanour, Stephen Stockwell, Jordan Stockwell, and Jason Koptchak; and five great-grandchildren, Hailee, Jacob, Colton, Nolan, and Wesson. A funeral service was held at the Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services, LLC, at 701 Lingle St. Osceola Mills, PA 16666, with Rev. Bruniooge officiating. Interment: Centre Cemetery in Osceola Mills, PA.

Burtis W. Dixon
Burtis W. Dixon, 75, of West Decatur, beloved husband, father and grandfather, passed away Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at his home surrounded by his family.
Born August 11, 1950, in Bigler, the son of Wallace and Violet (Maines) Dixon. Mr. Dixon had been employed with Glen Gery Brick for 45 years. He was a lifetime member of the Clearfield FOE Aerie 812. Burtis is survived by his wife, Judy (Condon) Dixon, three children: Tracey Vorpapel (Edward), Brad Dixon (Lara Sager) and Kristen Smith (Donny), six grandchildren: Haley McCall (Joe), Madison Vorpapel, Luke Dixon, Lucy Dixon, Aspen Smith and Alayna Smith and a great grandson, George McCall. He was preceded in death by his parents, two sisters: Shirley Ann and Shelia and a granddaughter, Alexa. Honoring Mr. Dixon's wishes there will be no public visitation or services.

Lois L. Sutton
Lois L. Sutton, 84, of Cresson, passed away February 6, 2026, surrounded by her loving family.
Born in Ashville January 30, 1942, the daughter of the late Bernard J. and Margaret (McGee) Lidwell. Preceded in death by her first husband Ralph "Dutch" Krise, brothers John, Francis, and Thomas Lidwell, sisters Rose Peterman, Dorothy Funicelli, Patricia Stock, and Mary Lou Kline. She is survived by her loving husband of 33 years Thomas Sutton, Children Diane (Paul) Corle, Nadine Bernazzoli, Sharon (Carl) Smith, James (Alison) Sutton, Matt Sutton, and Dana (Greg) Shaffer. Also survived by her brother Michael (Agnes) Lidwell, twelve grandchildren, and five great grandchildren as well as her good friend Donna Stoy. Lois was a member of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church where she had been a member of the choir along with the mainline Christian Chorus, as well as a member of the Cresson American Legion Auxiliary unit 238. She had retired as department manager at Kmart, Altoona. An avid reader, she also loved to walk and at one time bowled in the retired women's league of Altoona. Above everything, she loved spending time with her grandchildren. A Funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Cresson, the Rev. Leo Arnone celebrant. Committal: St. Francis Xavier Cemetery.

Shirley E. Shaffer
Shirley E. Shaffer, 89, of Clearfield, passed away Saturday, February 7, 2026, surrounded by family and friends, at Penn Highlands DuBois.
Born January 30, 1937, in Brookville, the daughter of John O. and Lulu S. (Heller) Welsh. Shirley worked at various places throughout her life, but most of all she enjoyed watching her grandchildren, sewing, gardening and baking. She was a longtime member of Trinity United Methodist Church, Clearfield where she participated in the Friendship Sunday School Class and volunteered for many different activities. Shirley is survived by her two children: Kimberly Dickinson and her husband Joseph of Chesapeake, VA and Stephen Shaffer and his wife Wendy of Curwensville; three grandchildren: Joshua Shaffer, Benjamin Shaffer and Amanda Ruffner Johnson; three great grandchildren: Corby, Clara and Amelia Johnson and numerous nieces and nephews. She was the last member of her generation having been preceded in death by her parents, six brothers: Willis, Wayne, Dale, Charles, Floyd and Robert Welsh, a sister, Dorothy Mauk, three half-brothers: Oral, Ernest and Clint Welsh and four half-sisters: Madge Howe, Geraldine Vasbinder, Helen Wolfe and Florence Macuga. Funeral services were held at the Bennett and Houser Funeral Home, Inc., Clearfield, with Dr. C. Frederick Ralston officiating. Interment: Vandervort Cemetery, Summerville.

Obituaries Courtesy of:
Heath's Funeral Home
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Notable events in colonial America in 1776

The year the United States came to be was an interesting time to be alive, particularly for those living in colonial America. The American Revolutionary War began in 1776, and much of the year was marked by events stemming from that conflict. Below are some of the more notable events to take place during a year that has come to symbolize so much to generations of Americans.

- Thomas Paine publishes his 47-page pamphlet *Common Sense* in Philadelphia on January 10. Initially published anonymously, the pamphlet is considered a watershed moment in American history, as Paine's easily digestible writing style appealed to the masses, helping promote his arguments that encouraged common people to fight for an egalitarian government.
- The Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge takes place near Wilmington, North Carolina on February 27. The battle is sparked when loyalists, after storming across a bridge over Moore's Creek, attack a group of men they believe to be rebels. Though the engagement was brief, two loyalist leaders are killed, another is captured and the force is scattered. The failed attempt later complicated efforts to recruit loyalists in the area to fight.
- The Fifth Virginia Convention is held in Williamsburg between May 6 and July 5. The meeting of the Patriot legislature of Virginia ultimately leads to the

declaration of Virginia as an independent state and the production of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which asserts the state's right to reform or abolish any form of government it deems inadequate.

- Thomas Hickey becomes an early casualty of the burgeoning conflict between the colonies and England when the Irish-born soldier is the first to be executed by the Continental Army for "mutiny, sedition, and treachery" on June 28 in New York City. Hickey had been part of a protective detail for General George Washington but was briefly jailed for passing counterfeit money. During that brief incarceration, Hickey told a fellow prisoner he was part of a conspiracy, and reports ultimately indicated he might have been part of a plot to assassinate General Washington, which proved enough to warrant his execution.
- An uptick incidents of violence between Native Americans and settlers in Kentucky was a ripple effect of the American Revolutionary War, and that increase in aggression was behind the capture of Jemima Boone and the Callaway girls on July 14. Days later Daniel Boone led a successful attempt to rescue his daughter and Elizabeth and Frances Callaway, who were the children of Colonel Richard Callaway, one of the first white settlers in Kentucky. A fictionalized version of the incident was included in James Fenimore Co-

per's novel *The Last of the Mohicans*.

- The Great Fire of New York destroys as much as 25 percent of all buildings in New York City as it burns through areas in lower Manhattan on September 20 and 21. The fire broke out shortly after British forces began occupying the city. While each side accused the other of arson in the aftermath of the fire, historians dispute such assertions, noting the fire likely started with burning rooftop debris before windy conditions spread the conflagration to surrounding buildings.

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In all, the upcoming season will feature 38 races - including 36 points events and two non-points races. Everything kicks off with the Clash exhibition race scheduled for Feb. 1, 2026, followed by the Daytona 500 on Feb. 15. The 2026 racing year concludes with the championship final on Nov. 8, at Homestead-Miami Speedway. This marks Homestead's return as the championship venue for the first time since 2019, taking over after Phoenix Raceway was reassigned in the 10-race playoff schedule.

This apparently begins an exciting new rotation of the championship race among different tracks on an anticipated annual basis.

In addition to Homestead's reinstatement as the championship track, there are three other significant modifications to the 2026 schedule: A temporary street circuit has been introduced at Naval Base Coronado in San Diego. Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet, Illinois, is making a comeback after being absent for six years. To accommodate the addition of San Diego and Chicagoland, NASCAR will not return to either Mexico City or the Chicago Street Course, a temporary track located in downtown Chicago that has hosted Cup races for the last three years.

In June 2025, Mexico City was the site of the

first international Cup points race since the 1950s, but logistical challenges (including finding a suitable date that worked for both NASCAR and the city) hindered plans for a return. Reports said NASCAR hopes to return to Mexico City and Chicago in 2027.

The race at Watkins Glen International will shift from its usual summer date back to Mother's Day weekend. This adjustment will set a record as the earliest in the year for a NASCAR race at the venue in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. Other tracks with date changes from 2025 to 2026, include Darlington Raceway in March, Kansas Speedway in April, Pocono Raceway in June, Sonoma Raceway in June, EchoPark Speedway in July, New Hampshire Motor Speedway in August, and Las Vegas Motor Speedway in October.

A Look Back at 2025

Winning last year meant membership in a pretty small club. There were only 14 different race winners, the fewest unique champions since 2020 when just 13 drivers claimed victory. Then the whole thing ended in an incredibly unexpected twist.

Kyle Larson secured his second championship without leading any laps in Phoenix. Instead, he took advantage of a late caution and opted for a two-tire pit-stop strategy. His surprising win followed notable internal challenges within the No. 5 team. Now Larson is hoping to replicate this success next year to join Joey Logano as an active three-time champion.

Denny Hamlin delivered his own standout season, clinching six victories while coming very close to his first championship title. He led 208 out of 312 laps in the championship race, only to be thwarted by a late caution and a risky tire strategy that ultimately cost him the win in overtime. It was a gut-wrenching loss for the No. 11 car.

William Byron began 2025 by winning the Daytona 500 for the second year in a row, then followed that with his first Regular Season Championship. That ensured a third consecutive appearance in the Championship 4. Meanwhile, Austin Dillon led 107 laps in the Cup Series and secured a win at Richmond Raceway. It was the most laps led by the No. 3 car in a Cup Series event since Dale Earnhardt's unforgettable victory in 1998's Daytona 500.

Christopher Bell's season was highlighted by four victories, with three coming in consecutive weeks. He began in the Round of 8 with a 37-point advantage over the cutline but saw his quest for the Championship 4 halted at Martinsville. Critics blamed late-race execution for Bell's failure to build on his strong regular-season

performance. NASCAR's subsequent offseason was marked by tragedy. A plane crash killed former Cup Series star Greg Biffle, his wife, his daughter and his son, along with three others.

Former Xfinity Series driver Michael Annett passed away unexpectedly on the same day RFK Racing driver Brad Keselowski saw his season threatened by a broken leg.

Then a home belonging to Joe Gibbs Racing driver Denny Hamlin's parents burned down in North Carolina. His father was killed and his mother was critically injured.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026

Fighting spirit Imler woman making comeback after recovering from stroke

By COLETTE COSTLOW
ccostlow@altoonamirror.com

On the morning of her daughter's first birthday, Echo Yoder went upstairs to change the baby's Diaper Genie, but she "felt weird" and sat down on the bed. When she couldn't get back up, her mom, Tammy Kincaid, stepped in to help and took Echo to Conemaugh Nason, which in turn sent her by helicopter to Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center in Johnstown.

On that day, Oct. 11, 2025, at 31 years of age, Echo suffered a stroke.

In the months that followed, Echo, filled with determination, worked hard to regain what she had lost and, while she still has a bit to go, she and her husband Jonathan showed off her fighting spirit during the 2026 Pennsylvania State Farm Show, where they gave a presentation about "farming, homesteading and overcoming obstacles," encouraging others to continue in the face of darkness.

"I will work every day to show my kids what it means to keep going," Echo said. "My goal is to get stronger than ever. I won't be defined by my stroke."

Fiercely farm

Echo was born on a beef farm in 1995 to Larry and

Tammy Kincaid of Rockwood, where she learned work ethic and farming techniques with her brother, Williams Kincaid.

"Growing up on the farm was hard work, but we learned to appreciate and value life," she said.

"We would get up before school, go to the barn, and then do barnwork again after school."

Larry recalls Echo's frequent journeys to their barn during snowstorms worse than last week's blizzard. When their goats were kidding, she was "out there constantly," he said.

While working on the farm, Echo attended school at Rockwood Area School District in Somerset County before switching to PA Cyber Charter School her freshman year. After graduating in 2012, Echo attended Pennsylvania Highlands Community College, earning an associate's degree in criminal justice in 2014.

And she kept on farming, noting that was one of the perks of a community college.

Echo met her husband Jonathan through 4-H, bonding over their mutual love of cows, Echo's mother-in-law, Lois Yoder, said.

The pair married in 2018 and set up their Imler farm, Echo Springs Farm, where they practice sustainable farming methods and offer self-sustainability classes that teach canning, food preservation and holistic remedies.

Because they both grew up farming, there was "never a question if we would farm," Echo said. "We both live for the farm life."

Welcoming their first child, Frances Susan, in 2020, Echo and Jonathan went on to create a family of five on the farm, aiming to "leave the land better than they found it, nurturing the next generation of farmers who will carry on their legacy and love for the land," their website states.

'Prayers, love and support'

The family's love of farming and their ties with the community have been stabilizing forces as Echo

fought through the effects of the stroke and diagnosis of two blood clots and a small bleed at the bottom of her brain stem.

That first day, when the stroke symptoms were still developing, Echo's dad was sitting in a tree stand, feeling helpless because he couldn't help his daughter.

"Thank God for cell-phones," he said, adding he was kept up-to-date throughout the process.

In the hospital, Echo's best friend Erin Jay cried. "Not out of sadness, but out of pure relief that my friend was still here."

Echo was hooked up to machines, couldn't talk or swallow, developed vision issues and had some paralysis.

"And even then, I could see it in her eyes. She was ready to fight like hell," Jay said.

Jonathan was steadfast by his wife's side, fighting with her and for her, while also taking care of their family, the farm and keeping the community up to date on her progress through regular Facebook posts.

Once critical hospital treatment ended, Echo was transferred to Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital, Altoona, where she had to relearn much of what is taken for granted.

After passing a swallow test, moving from a wheelchair to a walker and finally to a cane, and after hours spent working to get stronger, Echo returned to her Imler home 34 days after her stroke.

Written like a poem on Facebook, where friends and family received daily updates, Echo wrote on Nov. 21: "What have I learned in 6 weeks ... All strokes are different; strokes have their own timeline; how to swallow; how to move my leg and foot; how to move my arm and hand; how to grip things; who has my back; who will be there no matter what; life doesn't go as planned; don't take the small things for granted."

She ended with: "I want to thank everyone for the continued prayers, love and support."



Courtesy photos
Echo Yoder is pictured with her children: Frances Susan, 5, Mark Sawyer, 3, and Opal Sophia, 1. Below: Echo and Jonathan Yoder are seen on their way to the state Farm Show.

The prayers, love and support referenced in posts by Jonathan and Echo throughout her recovery show the family's great appreciation for the community.

While she and her family were dealing with life changes, her best friend set up a GoFundMe account to help with medical and travel expenses. Area churches made donations and residents offered their food and time. Tammy Kincaid organized a spaghetti dinner in Somerset County, and Lois Yoder collected 34 baskets for a raffle in Bedford County.

Community support was "just overwhelming," her parents said, adding that everyone helped during their time of need.

Echo always donated produce to local churches, so it was heartwarming to see "it come back," her dad said.

"People you didn't know were your friends stepped up," Lois said. "We're very fortunate that we live in an area where people still know their neighbors and care."

In an effort to give back to the community and to show their appreciation, Echo and Jonathan held an open house on Thanksgiving Day, inviting everyone and anyone to stop in, say hi and enjoy turkey and other goodies.

'Each day is a new day'

Today, nearly four months after her stroke, Echo said she's still recovering, gaining strength and coordination.

"Each day is a new day," she said. "I'm getting better

and stronger, but (there's) still a long road ahead."

Loved ones have also reflected on Echo's journey, commending her resilience.

"She shows people that even when life blindsides you, even when your world flips upside down in a single moment, you can still rise," Jay said. "You can still become someone even stronger than before."

Lois believes that if anyone has determination, it's her daughter-in-law. "She's determined to go back to work and be her old self again."

From week to week, Larry said he can see his daughter's progress. He has "no doubt" that she will regain strength.



"Give up is not in our vocabulary," he said. "We may lose, but we go down fighting."

As Echo works on her health and wellness, she wants people to "realize even if someone looks OK, that doesn't mean they are OK."

"Overcoming things like a stroke is difficult, and the public makes it more difficult," she said.

Regardless, she refuses to let her stroke "reframe my life."



Courtesy photos
Echo and Jonathan Yoder stand with their children and five sheep in August after showing at the Somerset County Fair.

The Yoder file

Name: Echo Yoder
Parents: Larry and Tammy Kincaid
Age: 31
Education: 2012 PA Cyber Charter School graduate; 2014 Penn Highlands Community College graduate with an associate's degree in criminal justice.
Occupation: Co-owner/operator of Echo Springs Farm
Family: Husband, Jonathan; three children: Frances Susan, 5, Mark Sawyer, 3, and Opal Sophia, 1

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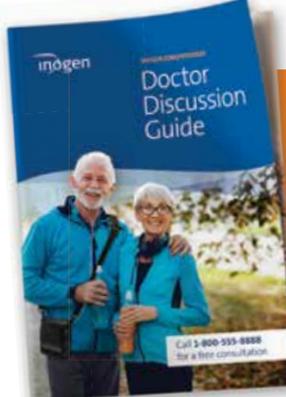
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USES: The Inogen Portable Oxygen Concentrator provides a high concentration of supplemental oxygen to patients requiring respiratory therapy on a prescriptive basis. It may be used in home, institution, vehicle, and various mobile environments. DO NOT USE IF: This device is not intended to be used in any way other than described in the indications for use. Do not use in parallel or series with other oxygen concentrators or oxygen therapy devices. This device is to be used as an oxygen supplement and is not intended to be life sustaining or life supporting. ONLY use this product if the patient is capable of spontaneous breath, able to inhale and exhale without the use of a machine. The conserving, or pulse dose, oxygen delivery technique used by this device is contraindicated in persons whose breathing during normal resting would be unable to trigger the device. Proper device triggering, setup and operation must be confirmed by an experienced clinician or other respiratory professional. Not for pediatric use. Not for use by tracheotomized patients. WARNINGS: The device produces enriched oxygen gas, which accelerates combustion. Do not allow smoking or open flames within 2m (6.56ft) of this device while in use. If you feel ill or uncomfortable, or if the concentrator does not signal an oxygen pulse and you are unable to hear and/or feel the oxygen pulse, consult your equipment provider and/or your physician immediately. If you are unable to communicate discomfort, you may require additional monitoring and or a distributed alarm system to convey the information about the discomfort and or the medical urgency to your responsible caregiver to avoid harm. Use only spare parts recommended by the manufacturer to ensure proper function and to avoid the risk of fire and burns. To avoid danger of choking or strangulation hazard, keep cords away from children and pets. TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER: The oxygen flow setting must be determined and recorded for each patient individually by the prescriber, including the configuration of the device, its parts, and the accessories. It is the responsibility of the patient to periodically reassess the setting(s) of the therapy for effectiveness. The proper placement and positioning of the prongs of the nasal cannula in the nose is critical for oxygen to be delivered.

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