

Allegheny West Magazine

Volume 20, Issue 117
December 2018/January 2019

FREE Direct Mail Community Publication

Magazine

WA Soccer's history-making state championship win

VFW Post 7714 steps up to help veterans, families over holidays

The Mall at Robinson's Santa continues to spread love and joy

Oakdale Hose Company gets its new fire truck

Encouraging the trade students of tomorrow

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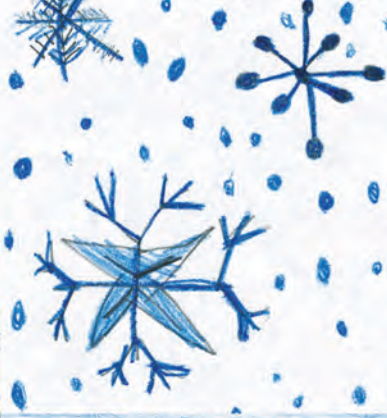


Allegheny West Magazine

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Once again, we asked West Allegheny elementary students to create the cover of our December edition. From the submissions, elementary art teachers helped us choose three from each grade. We then chose one for our cover. Only two artists submitted work from first grade so we chose one extra from another grade. The artists who created these pieces were (from top left) first-graders Sophia Marshall and Jalaya Cokrlc; second-graders Victoria Flores Cortez, Brandon George, and Jessabella Allen; third-graders Riley Callahan, Olivia Hawkins, and Jack Sekelik; fourth-graders Marinna Romano, Lucia Estevez and Cailyn Schmac; and fifth-graders Lacey Eaton, Avan Shipeck, and Julina Allen.

From the Publisher



Dear Readers,

Thank you for picking up our December West Allegheny edition of Allegheny West Magazine. I'd like to start this month's note by thanking all of the West Allegheny elementary students who once again submitted artwork to our annual holiday coloring contest. This was the fourth year that we held this contest and, once again, students did not disappoint. It was again a difficult decision but we picked our overall favorite for our cover and have printed the runner-ups on these pages. Thank you again to all who participated!

In this edition as well we're keeping another tradition going by once again bringing you our annual holiday events guide. As we move into the holidays, be sure and keep this guide handy as a reference for area visits with Santa, light-up events and more. Because the holidays are also a time of giving, we're bringing you a rundown of area philanthropic efforts to consider supporting as well.

Look for that edition in February. In the meantime, we here at Allegheny West Magazine would like to wish you happy holidays and a healthy New Year!

Doug Hughey,
Publisher and Editor

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ABOUT THE COVER

West Allegheny fifth-grader Arianna Kriest created this drawing for our annual holiday coloring contest. We chose Arianna's picture for its neat, strong lines and overall composition.

Ohio Valley Hospital's enchanting fall wine tasting brings record attendance

STORY AND PHOTOS
SUBMITTED

Warm shades of burgundy, dazzling champagne touches and a candlelit ambiance greeted more than 300 attendees at Ohio Valley Hospital's Eighth Annual "A Toast to the Community" event. The wine tasting was held Oct. 12 at the Hyatt Regency Pittsburgh International Airport. The guest list included community members, hospital board members, administration and hospital staff.

Guests had the opportunity to sample various Chairman's Selection Wines and unique craft beers. Some favorites of the night were Secondo Tempo Pinot Grigio Valdadige, Alexander Valley Vineyards Sin Zin Zinfandel and Tenuta Di Burchino II Burchino Toscana. Among the craft brews on tap were Southern Tier Brewing Company's Cherry Cordial Imperial Stout and Rusty Rail Brewing Company's Fool's Gold Peanut Butter Hefeweizen. Elysian Brewing Company's Night Owl Pumpkin Ale was served in cinnamon sugar-rimmed glasses which, when paired with candy corn, made for the perfect sweet fall treat.

The smooth jazz sounds of the Teddy Pantelas Trio set the mood for the evening. Along with wine and craft brew samples, guests enjoyed delicious, savory food stations and tried their luck on fabulous raffle prizes.

Along with Ohio Valley Hospital, Heritage Valley Health System and Gallagher Home Health Services served as premier sponsors for the event. Additional sponsorships from local organizations made "A Toast to the Community" quite the success. Top sponsors included the Ohio Valley Hospital medical staff, Telecare Corporation, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Ponder & Co., and Partners in Family Care.

Proceeds from this event will proudly fund community health initiatives such as the hospital's annual Diabetes Day, its 38th annual 5K and depression screenings.



Michael Miller and Norm Mitry of Heritage Valley Health System joined David W. Scott, FACHE, and Eric Lawlor of Ohio Valley Hospital for an evening of food, drinks and conversation at A Toast to the Community.



The smooth jazz sounds from the Teddy Pantelas Trio set the mood for a relaxing night. Local winemakers Wine of Friends brought a delicious red blend for guests to sample. Ohio Valley Hospital School of Nursing students volunteered their time to pour craft beers and wine.

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*Happy Holidays from
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Dagisich sets records for assists and goals

West Allegheny High School senior Nathan Dagisich became the varsity soccer team's new all-time career leader in goals and assists earlier this year. With his 74th career goal, Dragisich surpassed the record set by 2012 graduate Tyler Graziani. With his 46th career assist, he surpassed the mark set by 2016 graduate Cooper Amos.

Dragisich also scored three goals in the state championship game against Strath Haven on Nov. 16. West Allegheny own the match, thereby securing the team's first state championship in team history. For more on their championship run, see page 34.

Dragisich has committed to play Division 1 soccer at Duquesne University, where he plans to major in business. He holds a 3.8 GPA. This past summer, he was named to the Club Soccer All-American team and was also put on the Top Drawer Soccer pre-season High School All-American watch list.



Nathan Dragisich is pictured with Tyler Graziani shortly after Dragisich broke Graziani's scoring record.

WA volleyball team raises money for cancer research



Members of the West Allegheny girls volleyball team pose for a picture in the form of a ribbon.

The West Allegheny girls volleyball team once again raised money and awareness for breast cancer in October, which has been designated Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

On Oct. 11, the team organized a special "Dig Pink" night that called for a pink-out among fans. In all, \$2,400 was raised through the sale of Dig Pink t-shirts, auction baskets and a candy table. Those dollars were donated to the Side-Out Foundation, which supports research of Stage IV cancer. The team wrapped up their season with a return to the playoffs. For more, see page 34.

WA freshman competes at world karate competition

West Allegheny freshman and White Viper second degree black belt Colin Rakolta traveled to Dublin, Ireland to represent the U.S. at the World Karate and Kickboxing Commission's international competition. Rakolta qualified in WKC regional competition in Cincinnati, Ohio in February, which earned him a spot for the USA team qualifiers in Detroit, Michigan in June. There, he earned second place in traditional weapons, which earned him a spot on the 2018 USA Team. Rakolta's hard work and discipline continue to make a place for him in the ranks of the best in the world.



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STORY SUBMITTED BY CLEARVIEW FCU

Clearview presents donations to American Red Cross and Variety - the Children's Charity of Pittsburgh

Clearview Federal Credit Union, a member-based credit union serving 10 southwestern Pennsylvania counties, presented donation checks to the American Red Cross of Southwestern Pennsylvania and Variety - the Children's Charity of Pittsburgh. Both charities received a donation of \$5,000. All proceeds donated to the charities were raised from Clearview's annual golf outing through raffle prizes and vendor donations.

"We are always trying to make a difference in our community and we are honored to partner with two amazing organizations that hold the same values as Clearview," said Clearview CEO Ron Celaschi. "With our donations to the American Red Cross of Southwestern Pennsylvania and Variety - the Children's Charity of Pittsburgh, Clearview is able to be proactive in the community and provide support to those who need it."

The \$5,000 donation to the American Red Cross of Southwestern Pennsylvania will go to the victims of the Tree of Life tragedy that occurred Oct. 27. The \$5,000 donation to Variety - the Children's Charity of Pittsburgh will go toward helping children with disabilities live life to the fullest with a focus on mobility, communication and social inclusion.



Clearview Federal Credit Union President and CEO Ron Celaschi (at left) and Clearview Vice President of Facilities and Governmental Affairs Ralph Canterbury (who is also chairman of the Clearview Charity Golf Outing, at right) present Variety - The Children's Charity CEO Charles LaValle and American Red Cross Southwestern PA Chapter Regional Philanthropy Officer Connie Cavrich with \$5,000 checks. PHOTO SUBMITTED

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Montour Valley VFW Post 7714 steps up to help veterans, families over holidays

Veterans of Foreign Wars posts are justifiably proud of the memorabilia displayed in their social halls and meeting places - but few can boast anything as conspicuous as a fighter jet.

Located directly across from Penn Lincoln Center on Steubenville Pike, VFW Post 7714's F-86 Sabre jet catches the eyes of hundreds, if not thousands, of shoppers and commuters each day. Seen by an equal number next to the aircraft is a marquee that often displays maxims relating to teamwork and community involvement.

Like that F-86 jet once did over the skies of Western Pennsylvania, VFW Post 7714 Post Commander Robert A. Haag is hoping some of those ideas displayed on the sign take off, too - especially over the upcoming holiday season.

"We're more than just a club - especially during the holidays," said Haag, an Army veteran who served in Vietnam. "We're here to help veterans, their families and our community. We'd especially like to extend a hand during Christmas, when many of our local service members from reserve and active duty units may be deployed away from home."

Planned by the post is a Dec. 8 children's Christmas party that is open and free to the public from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Also scheduled on the post's event calendar is a Christmas party for the unit's members. According to Haag, these types of outreach events have been going on since the post was chartered in 1947.

"We're hoping to reach out to all local veterans and let them know that the post is here to support them," said Haag. "We're proud to be part of an outfit that is committed to helping veterans - who in many cases are also our neighbors."

To help fund these holiday activities for veterans and their families, the post holds various events throughout the year. An example of a recent successful fundraiser was a purse bingo. Except for operational costs, said Haag, all of the money raised through this effort went toward the post's benevolent fund. From there, it is used to directly help veterans - as well as fund a nationwide network of VFW service officers.

"Perhaps the biggest benefit to joining the VFW is learning what

programs are available to assist veterans," said Martin Morris, a Vietnam veteran who is VFW Post 7714's service officer. "Pension programs, jobs programs and medical help is available for veterans. Post service officers are trained how to guide veterans to the agencies that can best help them."

Service officers funded by the VFW have a long tradition of aiding veterans in accessing hard-earned benefits. According to statistics compiled by the Department of Pennsylvania VFW, state service officers helped 2,099 veterans with initial compensation claims to the Veterans Administration over the last fiscal year, with another 802 veterans assisted in reopening existing compensation claims.

In all, 6,708 claims were submitted through department service officers during the 2017-2018 fiscal year. This resulted in more than \$18 million paid in disability compensation, and over \$7 million paid in retroactive benefits to veterans and their families.

Funds raised by VFW Post 7714 help VFW state service officers link veterans to the benefits merited through their time in the military. Each fundraiser done by the Montour Valley post contributes to this effort.

"Any veteran can get access to a VFW service officer to assist



Veterans of Foreign Wars Montour Valley Post 7714 Commander Robert A. Haag stands next to his unit's F-86 Sabre jet on Steubenville Pike. In keeping up with its more than seven decades of service to the community, the local VFW post is hosting a children's Christmas party Dec. 8, as well as other activities throughout the new year. PHOTO SUBMITTED



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with benefits,” Morris said. “All of their talent and expertise is paid by the VFW. Veterans are not charged anything, and are never billed.”

Throughout last year, nearly 50,000 veterans and their family members received some level of support from Pennsylvania VFW service officers, with the staff handling more than 407,000 separate communications over the past six years.

On a national scale, the VFW’s efforts are even more impressive. Over the last dozen years, approximately two million service members and their families have received help from the VFW Military Assistance Program. Additionally, the VFW’s worldwide network of service officers over a three-year period has helped nearly 300,000 disabled veterans recover approximately \$6.9 billion in benefits.

Pittsburgh-area posts like VFW Post 7714 have supported local student scholarship programs and taken part in fundraising activities for the Arthritis Foundation.

Locally, VFW Post 7714 participates in a myriad of activities, such as in ceremonies honoring veterans at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies and volunteering at the Veterans Administration Hospital on University Drive in Pittsburgh. The post is also active with local scout troops.

During the holiday season, the post steps up its service to those in need. It becomes a designated drop-off point for the Marine Toys For Tots program, and teams with American Legion Wesoloski-Hays Post 335 in Imperial to increase its hospital visitation program.

“Many of these veterans have no families, and many are

homeless,” the post commander said. “The VA takes care of their medical needs, but our donations help provide these men and women with personal care items and other things to help make their lives more comfortable.”

“When we served, the motto was ‘No man left behind,’” Haag said. “I would like to say our motto now is ‘No man forgotten.’”

In recent years, filling the ranks with new members has become a greater challenge for VFW Post 7714. Requirements for joining the 119-year-old society founded in Pittsburgh are often more restrictive than other veterans’ service organizations. Each candidate for the VFW must present documented proof of receiving a campaign or occupational medal for overseas service, served 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days in Korea, or received hostile fire or imminent danger pay. Additionally, no applicant with a dishonorable discharge is accepted.

Though the group welcomes social members, veterans are needed to keep the unit moving forward, Haag said.

“We’ve got something good here that helps veterans,” the post commander said. “It has been going on for more than 100 years, and we’d like to help keep it going for hundreds more.”

For more information about VFW Post 7714 and its activities, contact the unit at (724) 695-8866.

Michael P. Mauer served as an Army photojournalist during Operation Desert Storm. He was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf for his actions during the war, and is a life member of VFW Post 914 Intrepid in West Mifflin.



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Unfortunately, until now the only treatment options for these types of conditions have been surgery or medications, which often have unwelcome side effects.

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This high-powered laser therapy targets damaged tissue with specific wavelengths of light that have been found to interact with tissue and accelerate the healing process. Much like photosynthesis in plants, light energy passes through the skin and into the cell membrane, initiating a process called photobiostimulation. This process enhances the body's natural regenerative functions and stimulates the release of endorphins and collagen. It can eventually even normalize damaged or injured tissue.

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- Whiplash/auto accident injuries
- Carpal tunnel syndrome

Result time does vary. Some individuals experience improvement after the very first treatment while others will not feel improvement until after a number of treatments, which should not be mistaken to mean that the condition is not improving. Each treatment is cumulative and results are often felt after three or four sessions. Each treatment usually lasts less than 10 minutes and generally has no side effects.

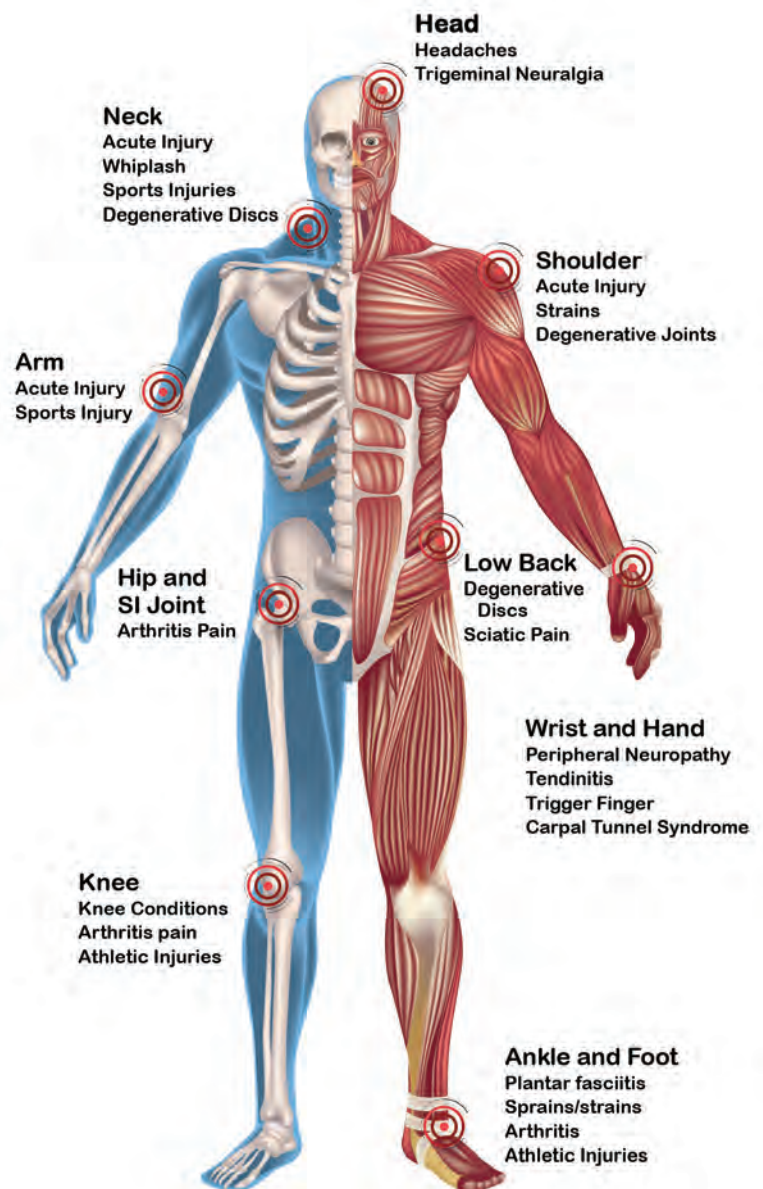
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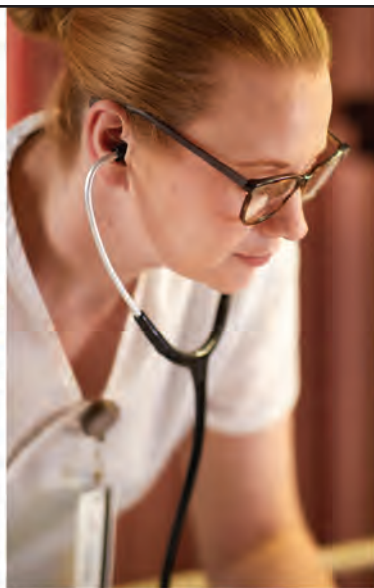
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New kickboxing gym opens in Kennedy Township

When most people think of kickboxing they probably envision a solitary or one-on-one workout with a hanging bag.

A new kind of kickboxing workout is, however, gaining traction across the fitness world and even has been featured on the Today Show, Fox News, CBS News, in Women's Health and in Men's Health. The new trend is being pioneered by iLoveKickboxing.com, which gets patrons in shape with an hour of HIIT training that includes cardio, stretching, instructed bag round and glove drills. Earlier this year, one of iLoveKickboxing's newest locations opened in the Kenmawr Plaza in Kennedy Township.

When patrons walk through the door at the Kennedy Township iLoveKickBoxing studio, past the intriguing, flashing lights surrounding an iLoveKickboxing.com sign outside, they're greeted by smiling instructors as a workout song plays in the background. Patrons then slide their hands into a pair of gloves that are now theirs and immediately feel stronger and more confident. The atmosphere - between the music, the bags, the mats, and the 10 to 20 people smiling and having casual conversation before their workout - is invigorating. Instructors already know their students' names. Even the newest patrons, meanwhile, feel like they are already part of the group and a veteran of the sport. They then pick their own bags and the next hour flies by. At the end of the workout, everyone is still smiling.

Anyone who is new to this workout need not be worried about their fitness level at iLoveKickboxing Kennedy Township. The studio welcomes people with all types of fitness levels, even those who feel that they haven't been active enough. At

iLoveKickboxing Kennedy Township, patrons work at their own pace and, before they know it, they have more energy and are even more active outside the studio. On top of that, during classes instructors stay with their students on the mat to help them modify and create exercises to keep them moving comfortably. Instructors help students with everything from the correct fighter's stance to teaching them how to deliver the perfect roundhouse. Throughout the workout, instructors walk around to make sure everyone is getting the best workout and accomplishing each punch and kick safely.

Many people who now attend regularly started out having no experience with kickboxing.

"I have given up so many times before but ILKB keeps me on track and makes me want to keep making healthier and better decisions," says Shelby Thomas. "ILKB helped me lose the rest of the weight I needed to win my challenge and hit my first goal and I plan on starting another one ASAP."

Doreen DiNello, meanwhile, says she's lost 12 pounds and over 10 body inches since starting with iLoveKickboxing Kennedy Township.



ABOVE: Patrons at iLoveKickboxing Kennedy Township pose for a picture following a group workout.
BELOW: Patrons work with their partners during a workout.



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ILOVEKICKBOXING KENNEDY TOWNSHIP

"I have also noticed some muscle tone in my arms and legs as well as improved firmness in my mid-section," she says. "I still have a long way to go, but I have made progress!"

Christina Magnotta says the community atmosphere is what keeps her coming back.

"Everyone there makes you feel like family," she says. "Never any judging, just motivating and pushing you to be your best. Thank you to everyone for pushing this 43-year-old."

Eileen Loeffert says she's been recommending iLoveKickBoxing Kennedy Township and will continue to do so.

iLoveKickboxing Kennedy Township's goal is to get patrons moving for one hour, during which students will remain motivated, smiling and even having a good time while getting an awesome workout.

The iLoveKickboxing Kennedy Township studio is located at 500 Pine Hollow Road in the Kenmawr Plaza. For more, visit www.ilovekickboxing.com/studio/index.php?id=650.



FOOT FACTS

Bunions are among the most common type of foot ailment today's podiatrist treats, especially in women. Studies show that women are anywhere from two to nine times more likely to develop a bunion than men! While your high heels and peep toes are partially to blame, your foot type (passed down through your family) is the true culprit. Here's the good news! Today's podiatrist is the true expert when it comes to diagnosing and treating bunions.

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Allegheny Medical welcomes Kelly A. Shearer to practice

Allegheny Medical, a family-owned private practice providing care to the greater western Pennsylvania Area, welcomed its newest member in October. Kelly A. Shearer CRNP, A-GNP-C brings with her a background of knowledge in adult and general medicine, cardiac, emergency, dermatology, allergy, and critical care. Those qualifications and her bright personality made her the best candidate to assist clients on their journey to good health.

Shearer joins the practice after serving her country, both in the military and as a nurse at the VA. A longtime West Allegheny resident, Shearer served in the military for five years as a military police officer. She then attended a two-year nursing program at the Ohio Valley Hospital School of Nursing. Upon graduation, she accepted a position at Mercy Hospital and went on to obtain her BSN at Slippery Rock University before working as an emergency room nurse.

While working at the VA, Shearer served as a women's health advocate by attending conferences and working to make the needs of women veterans more accessible and prevalent.

Earlier this year, Shearer completed her nurse practitioner degree at the University of Cincinnati. She completed her clinical placements in primary care at the VA, in dermatology at the VA, and with Allegheny Medical in primary care. As a graduation requirement, Shearer researched cultural differences in diabetic education. She studied cultural and ethnic differences in order to effectively deliver and change perceptions to those with different cultural backgrounds about diabetes and its fundamentals as a provider.

Allegheny Medical is conveniently located off of the Montour Run Road Exit from I-376. The practice has been awarded the Best of Pittsburgh's Healthcare Providers 10 years in a row and for physical therapy two years in a row. Since its inception in 1984, the practice has expanded to be a leader in several divisions of care. It now has over 10 treating providers of multiple specialties.

Allegheny Medical's dedication to providing health care above the rest to its patients and neighbors is thriving more than ever. Its primary care department offers walk-in care, where patients are able to be seen for minor emergency care. They can also be scheduled for skin biopsies, arthritic care and all other areas of concern at once.

As part of its primary care branch, Allegheny Medical also offers hormone therapy, which can dramatically improve the overall quality of patients' health.

As well, Allegheny Medical provides individualized care plans for each patient and servicing all of their needs in one location.

Within its sports medicine department, Dr. Adams, who works closely with the West Allegheny Football Program, and the rest of his team provide functional assessments as well as computerized

graphing analyses of strength by conducting isometric muscle testing for athletes to determine a personalized performance plan.

This is achieved by integrating fitness, lifestyle and behavior management with medical practices.

Allegheny Medical's occupational medicine division is a leader in the arena of work-related medicine, providing in-house and mobile services to multiple Fortune 500 companies in the area. The practice also offers corporate wellness programs and certified pre-employment physicals to assure an employee or applicant can physically perform the responsibilities to execute the job safely and successfully.

Allegheny Medical's providers offer expert and compassionate care by creating treatment plans that are personalized to each patient and that focus on whole body care. The practice provides the convenience and accessibility of multiple services in a single visit.

Complete care in one place is Allegheny Medical's commitment to its patients.



Kelly A. Shearer



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*Valentine Chocolate Tasting
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After 17 years, The Mall at Robinson's Santa continues to spread love and joy

During the Christmas season, many parents are faced with devising explanations when their young children ask why there are so many different white-bearded men in fuzzy red and white suits around the area. Answers usually involve a variation of "Santa needs lots of helpers" or "We know where the REAL Santa is."

If the real Santa were asked to please stand up, he would have to wait until the end of his shift at The Mall at Robinson. The children, adults and, occasionally, pets waiting in an ever-present line at the Christmas village there would however prefer for him to stay seated until they've had their chance to snuggle onto his cozy lap and look into his gentle face.

The Mall at Robinson Santa - a.k.a. Christopher Nicholas Claus - has been inviting visitors to his chair since the mall opened in 2001. During that time, he has spoken with tens of thousands of people, many of them returning children who he remembers from year to year.

Santa recalled his oldest visitor to the mall as a woman named Marie who was celebrating her 104th birthday. Her daughters brought her wheelchair next to his seat, but Marie asked to be lifted out of it because "it is proper to sit on Santa's lap."

The youngest visitor was a 46-hour-old infant whose parents stopped for a picture with Santa on their way home from the hospital delivery room. The newborn was among the first of Santa's guests this holiday season.

Santa and Mrs. Claus (yes, they are truly married and have children of their own) are fixtures on the lower level of The Mall at Robinson every day except Thanksgiving Day, from the first week of November until Christmas Eve. Their shifts start at 10 a.m. and last until 9 p.m., with two breaks in between. On Sunday, they see visitors from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.

That adds up to more than 400 hours per season over the course of 17 years just at Robinson. In all of that time, Santa has never missed a day for sickness. People often comment that he must be exhausted in his role, but he replies that he has endless energy because he "gets so jazzed by the kids."

Prior to the opening of The Mall at Robinson, Santa was listening to children's requests in various other places. His previous longest stint was five years at a mall in Baltimore. The man in red says that he always loved the idea of Christmas in general, with its elements of faith, joy and magic. When he "had the opportunity to step into several roles" in the past, a persona was born.

Santa also serves as a lay pastor for the Presbyterian Church and sees a similarity between his two callings. He stated that being Santa Claus is a ministry of sorts that gives him the opportunity to tell children that "when you're good, good things will follow."

"I've yet to meet a child that doesn't know exactly what I'm talking about," he said, using the example of older children who

begin standing off to the side while their younger siblings take a seat on his lap.

He speaks to the doubtful children about using some of their own money to buy a gift for a child in need whom they've never met.

He said that these kids are touched by the thought of creating magic for a stranger themselves and inevitably admit to him that they always receive a gift from Santa on Christmas morning.



Santa poses for a picture in his chair at The Mall at Robinson.

A self-described moralist who tells children they may ask for "almost anything," Santa commented that he has made some young children cry by telling them "no" when they ask for inappropriately mature video games.

"I'm not just a prop...I'm not here just for photography," stated Santa, adding that he encourages kids to be everything they can be.

He loves to promote books, often telling children that "people who read also think."

In his years of listening to children, Santa has often gotten requests from them for other family members or for non-material items. At times, the requests have been comical, as in "Pap wants a new truck!" Other, more heart-breaking wishes include a boy who asked that Santa make his dad's legs work again so that he could get up and run with him like he used to.

A background in counseling and years of training compelled Santa to gently tell this boy that "even magic has limits," but that there were many activities the boy could do with his dad that involved his arms and mind instead.

The Mall at Robinson's Santa is likely one of few who is fluent in multiple languages, including French, Spanish and German. He knows a fair amount of Chinese and Japanese, and began studying Farsi and Ukrainian after learning that the Pittsburgh area has several enclaves of people who speak the latter languages.

Santa is also fluent in American Sign Language and says "you've never seen such excited kids in your life" as the children who are deaf and realize when they reach his lap that he can sign with them.

Mrs. Claus also enjoys talking with visitors as they wait in line, often acting as a buffer to first-time adults who wonder why it takes so long to get to the big man. Once they hear Santa in action, she says proudly, they understand his popularity is because of the attention he gives to each guest.

Mrs. Claus mentioned a grandfather who recently drove from Akron with his grandkids because someone told him "he had to go to The Mall at Robinson." He was beginning to lose patience, but after his delighted grandkids had their visit, he said "it was worth the drive."

Santa and Mrs. Claus enjoy a summer home in Colorado where, in the "off" season, he loves to go fishing and she loves to cook.

STORY AND PHOTO BY DOUG HUGHEY

Oakdale Hose Company gets its new fire truck

When flooding caused by Hurricane Ivan inundated downtown Oakdale in 2004, it didn't spare the Oakdale Hose Company.

Among the department's equipment that was compromised was its 1976 Mack fire truck.

Though the department had insurance, they were shocked when they filed a claim and discovered that their insurer wouldn't cover the cost of a new truck. Instead, the department got just over \$20,000, or the cost to repair the truck, and found out their carrier wasn't going to insure it in the future.

"We donated it to a campground in Ohio," says Bill Hartman, the hose company's fire chief. "The owner takes kids on rides in it."

To replace the truck, the Parkway West Rotary and Oakdale Masonic Lodge purchased the department a 1984 Seagrave for around \$2,000. The truck was just supposed to get the department through the next couple of years. Thirteen years later, however, it was still in use.

On Nov. 3, the fire department finally got a new truck to replace the one it lost in the flood - and not just one that's new to the department, but brand new. Hartman says they even honored an old tradition of carrying water from the old truck over to the new truck with a bucket the day they received it. The truck also received a blessing.

The truck was delivered nearly a year after the department signed a contract with Toyne Fire Apparatus of Breda, Iowa to supply the department with a Spartan Metrostar Cab. At the time,

Hartman, who also works as a paid firefighter for Bellevue, said they had ordered the new truck with Oakdale's narrow streets in mind. With 26-inch-deep equipment bays, the new truck is

capable of holding tons of life-saving rescue equipment and about 127 feet of ladders, meaning they won't need to get multiple vehicles in front of a fire.

Hartman says the new truck isn't in use yet but will be once they outfit the compartments to hold equipment. Once it is put into service, it will complement the department's other, much smaller 1997 Pierce truck.

Hartman says the department purchased the new truck using money largely collected during fundraisers like the firemen's annual fair, bingo nights and a mailer soliciting donations. Oakdale

Borough has also agreed to contribute 50 percent of funds raised up to \$40,000. Hartman says they tried to get grant funding but were unable. He says the department will be making a \$32,000 payment for the next 13 years and that \$13,000 the department receives from the state annually will go toward debt reduction. The department will have to raise the remaining amount itself.

Still, Hartman says the final cost was \$15,000 below budget, and that the department got everything it wanted in the truck.

As for the Seagrave, Hartman says they donated it to a technical school in Jefferson Hills that plans to use it to train firefighters.

"They were happy to have it," he says. "They didn't have anything."



The Oakdale Hose Company's new fire truck arrived Nov. 3. It replaces a 1984 Seagrave that was donated to the department to replace a truck that was compromised in flooding caused by Hurricane Ivan.



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During the time that Anthony Saveikis has been serving as the a district judge, he's often encountered people who made wrong turns in life. Whether they've ended up in his courtroom in North Fayette Township for driving under the influence, traffic offenses or possessing narcotics, a lot of them would have benefitted from a good job that would have not only helped them pay their bills but also kept them on the right side of the law.

That's why, a number of years ago, the judge started inviting the heads of construction companies and union leaders to a fall and spring semester breakfast he organizes for members of law enforcement. The group meets at Parkway West Career and Technology Center's student-run restaurant.

After breakfast, while members of law enforcement meet, the rest of the group heads over to the school's classrooms to talk with students in trade classrooms like welding, carpentry and HVAC. For the most part, the message they deliver to students is simple: there are good-paying jobs in the trades if they work hard, aren't afraid to learn, enjoy what they do and stay away from drugs.

"Our journeymen make anywhere between \$30 and \$35 an hour on their paycheck," Richie Stanizzo, business manager of the Pittsburgh Regional Building Trades Council, told a group of students in a carpentry classroom during one such visit. "It's full healthcare, pension and compensation. We're looking for people who have a driver's license, can pass a drug test, can learn and go to work every day."

Saveikis says he originally started the breakfasts with state police officer Lt. Sheldon Epstein in an effort to familiarize law enforcement from different departments with each other. That includes local police chiefs, Allegheny County Police, the Allegheny County District Attorney's office and the sheriff.

In more recent years, Saveikis has gotten construction company heads like Bindy Bucci, owner of Golden Triangle Construction, Dean Mosites, president and CEO of Mosites Construction, and Francis Casilli, president of Casper Colosimo & Son, to come to the breakfasts. He's also gotten Bill Brooks, president of the Pittsburgh Regional Building Trades Council and the business manager for Laborers Local 373, to come. Representatives from the Allegheny County Airport Authority and the Keystone Mountain Lakes Regional Council of Carpenters and Steam Fitters 449 have visited as well. Among the first to start coming to the breakfasts was Dennis Wilke, president of Rosedale Technical College.

Saveikis says he wants young students in the trades to be aware of the bright future that awaits them, and he doesn't want students to just take his word for it.

"The kids may not listen to me telling them what they need to do," says Saveikis. "But the trades guys can say, 'I'm going to put you to work,' and they can point to the president of a construction company and say, 'They're going to give you a paycheck.'"

Currently, work prospects in the trades are looking particularly



ABOVE: Steve Mazza, a representative from the Keystone Mountain Lakes Regional Council of Carpenters, talks with students at Parkway West Career and Technology Center. Also pictured are Judge Anthony Saveikis; Dean Mosites, president and CEO of Mosites Construction; and Harold McDonald of the carpenter's union. **BELOW:** Saveikis and Bindy Bucci, owner of Golden Triangle Construction, talk with a student at PWCTC about opportunities for women in construction. **BOTTOM:** Saveikis visits with welding students at PWCTC.

good in the area, as major construction projects like I-576, Shell Chemical's ethane cracker plant and numerous others have ramped up across the region. Natasha Johnston, PWCTC's workforce development coordinator, says she gets calls constantly from construction companies looking for workers and that some of those jobs pay upwards of \$60,000 right out of high school. Welders can earn upwards of six figures five years out of school, she says, pointing out that's with no debt. Johnston says 95 percent of students complete their program of study and that 75 percent of them pursue a related post-secondary, military or employment career path.

Robert Rossell, academic chair for the trades at Pittsburgh Technical College, says he's also seeing high demand for workers, particularly in the welding and HVAC sectors. As well, Deb Gray, owner of the staffing firm Express Pittsburgh West, says she gets calls "daily" from smaller, non-union construction companies and shops looking to hire reliable workers in a range of fields.

In between 2016 and 2017, unemployment among construction workers in the area dropped by half, according to a report published by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. Mike Welsh, council representative for the Keystone Mountain Lakes Regional Council of Carpenters, says the union is the busiest he's seen it in the two decades he's been with the union. Lou Gilberti, another representative with the union, told Allegheny West Magazine before he retired last year that the activity was

the highest he'd seen in over four decades.

Welsh says union workers are currently busy building not only I-576 and the ethane cracker plant, but also hospitals and residential apartment complexes in Pittsburgh. In years to come, Welsh says he expects to see more development from industries that utilize ethylene produced at the cracker plant. Other major regional projects include a major renovation to Pittsburgh International Airport and construction projects for Alcosan.





STORY AND PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Holy Trinity students finish atop robotics competition

Welsh says he can place workers in jobs paying \$20 an hour with benefits. Graduates of their four-year program make \$33 an hour with benefits. The union will even cover courses at CCAC if workers want to pursue an associate degree to become a foreman or superintendent.

Welsh points out, though, that workers need to be accountable. “You got to want to work,” he says. “You can’t be late or not show up. We don’t have any seniority here either so if you don’t show up they get rid of you.”

At PWCTC, students also need to show the right attitude and aptitude in the classroom for Johnston to recommend them for work, not only after they graduate but also through a co-op program the school runs. Through that program, students can work for companies like Mascaro Construction and earn \$15 an hour while they’re still in school. By the time they graduate, they can have two years of work experience under their belts.

Even for students who show the proper work ethic, however, there are other hurdles. Johnston says one of the biggest ones many students face is transportation. Students need to have cars to drive to jobs offered under the co-op but many do not. Bussing to PWCTC is provided by the high schools that send students there.

“I have more jobs than I have students with cars,” she says.

Johnston says she’d like to start a shuttle service with money from its foundation.

Gray also says that transportation is a major issue for some of her workers. She says she often gives out gift cards for bus passes to new workers just to get them started. She says that’s why her office was glad to see a recent decision by the Port Authority to extend service of its 28X-Airport Flyer and the 21-Coraopolis bus routes.

Gray also cites childcare as another major hurdle for some.

If construction continues on its expected course in the region, companies will increasingly be looking for reliable workers. How workers overcome the hurdles facing them will depend not only on them but also on the entities that train, place and hire them.

Either way, as Saveikis points out, referencing the need for workers to keep a driver’s license by staying out of trouble, “You can’t build a bridge from home.”



A team comprised of Holy Trinity students (also pictured below) won an award for best middle school entry at the BEST Robotics Competition in November.

The Holy Trinity Catholic School Robotics Club participated in the BEST Robotics Competition in November at Grove City College, where they won best middle school entry. This was the fourth year that sixth, seventh and eighth grade students had the opportunity to participate in the challenge.

The task this year, which was entitled “Current Events,” was to build a robot in six weeks that could simulate ocean clean-up by removing plastic garbage from artificial ocean “gyres” that were constructed aside a moving “current” beam that the robot navigated. Students needed to design the robot as well as program it. The team competed with their robot in three-minute matches. Points were scored by removing garbage and rescuing wildlife in the form of rubber ducks and 3D computer-generated turtles.

In addition to the robot competition, teams were also required to submit a project engineering notebook, give an oral presentation, demonstrate spirit and sportsmanship, and provide an educational display. Though the overall competition has middle and high schools competing against each other, a Best Middle School Award is given to the middle school that accumulates the most total points in each of the categories.

BEST (Boosting Engineering Science & Technology) Robotics, Inc. is a nonprofit volunteer organization whose goal is to “inspire middle through high school students to pursue careers in engineering, science, technology, and mathematics through participation in a sports-like, hands-on, real-world, engineering-based robotics competition.” BEST has a hub at Grove City College and, in 2018, established an additional hub at Carnegie Mellon University. The BEST competition at Grove City is presented by The Elliott Group. VEX Robotics is a supplier to the BEST Robotics competition.





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PAACC launches corporate partnership program to promote and advocate for airport area

The Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce, Robert Morris University and the Allegheny County Airport Authority have joined forces to develop a corporate voice for employers who make up the airport corridor, the fastest growing area in the region.

Called the Airport Area Corporate Partnership, the initial members include: Allegheny County Airport Authority, Allegheny Medical Integrated Health Services, Alorica/Greentree, Bayer Corporation, Burns Scalo Real Estate Development, Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation, Community College of Allegheny County, Civil & Environmental Consultants, Clearview Federal Credit Union, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Comcast, Covestro LLC, Eaton Corporation, Expedient, Express Employment Professionals, FedEx Ground, Heritage Valley Health System, HRV Conformance Verification Associates, Industrial Scientific Corporation, Michael Baker International, Multi Print Media, Nova Chemicals, Partners for Quality, Peoples Natural Gas, the Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Pittsburgh Technical College, Robert Morris University, Rosedale Technical College, The Builders Guild of Western Pennsylvania and UPMC Health Plan.

The goal of the partnership will be to provide a unified voice for the corporate community in the airport corridor and to promote continued growth and workforce development. The partnership will be creating a portfolio of testimonials to champion the airport corridor as a quality urban center and recruit new businesses to locate in the area.

“This partnership looks to advocate, help promote and, most importantly, listen to the corporate members and define what they need as our largest employers in the airport corridor,” said Chris Heck, president and CEO of the PAACC. “With a unified voice,

we can build on the world-class corporate assets in the region to tackle issues like workforce development, transportation and infrastructure.”

In addition, the Airport Area Corporate Partnership will offer tangible assets through its partners, such as executive leadership training through Robert Morris University. Corporate partners also will be able to communicate with the airport authority on issues vital to business growth, including information on business and cargo travel, both international and domestic; real estate development on authority land; and electric generation through an airport authority micro grid project that utilizes natural gas.

“Robert Morris University is pleased to be a founding member of the Airport Area Corporate Partnership,” commented Jonathan Potts, vice president of marketing and public relations for Robert Morris University.

“Education is vital to developing a workforce that will attract and keep leading corporations in the airport corridor.”

“Pittsburgh International Airport is a key economic driver for the entire region and the Allegheny County Airport Authority is proud to offer the Airport Area Corporate Partnership members a communication channel regarding their business travel

and cargo needs,” continued Vince Gastgeb, vice president, government and community affairs for the Allegheny County Airport Authority. “We look forward to seamless communication with our business and cargo partners.”

There is no cost to join the Airport Area Corporate Partnership, but members must be committed to participating regularly to the Partnership’s shared priorities. For more information on joining the partnership, please contact the PAACC at (412) 264-6270 or info@paacc.com.



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www.OakdaleYouthLeague.com*

In-person registration is also available on:

**Saturday, Feb. 2 - 12 - 4 p.m.
Wednesday, February 13 - 6 - 7 p.m.**

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





Superintendent's Message

West Allegheny is committed to ensuring that every graduate is connected to a viable post-secondary pathway for which they are ready and prepared to persist, whether it be through our Early College in High School Academy (ECIHSA), Advanced Placement program, or Career and Technical Program in partnership with Parkway West Career and Technology Center. Our goal is to have every graduate earn college credits and/or industry credentials/certificates by the time they graduate.

With that in mind, the focus of this edition's Superintendent's Message is our inaugural year of the West Allegheny Early College in High School Academy (ECIHSA) in partnership with the Community College of Allegheny County. The ECIHSA was designed in the 2017-2018 school year and offers hallmark

programs in cybersecurity and multimedia game simulation. ECIHSA allows our students to work toward attaining a high school diploma while completing the first year or two of college with the goal of earning a college certificate and/or associate degree. Unlike most dual enrollment programs where students take additional college courses outside of their West Allegheny courses, ECIHSA courses embed and align CCAC course requirements and count for credit toward both transcripts.

In this inaugural year, we are extremely excited to have 150 students registered for almost 850 CCAC college credits. Sixty-one students are enrolled in six college credits, 53 are enrolled in three college credits and we have 13 students enrolled in 12 to 18 college credits as of CCAC's fall registration. In the spring semester, we have 190 additional students eligible to register for college credit. We chose CCAC as our ECIHSA partner as a result of CCAC being the top post-secondary institution that our West Allegheny graduates attend. Approximately 14 to 20 percent of each of our graduating classes over the past nine years (2010 to 2018) chose CCAC for their

post-secondary education, representing close to 300 students. That is compared to the second highest post-secondary choice, Penn State University, with approximately 160 students. With such a large number of our students choosing CCAC, it was a logical choice to pursue CCAC as a partner to develop the early college model focused on the high priority occupations of cybersecurity and multimedia game simulation. Further, CCAC credits are

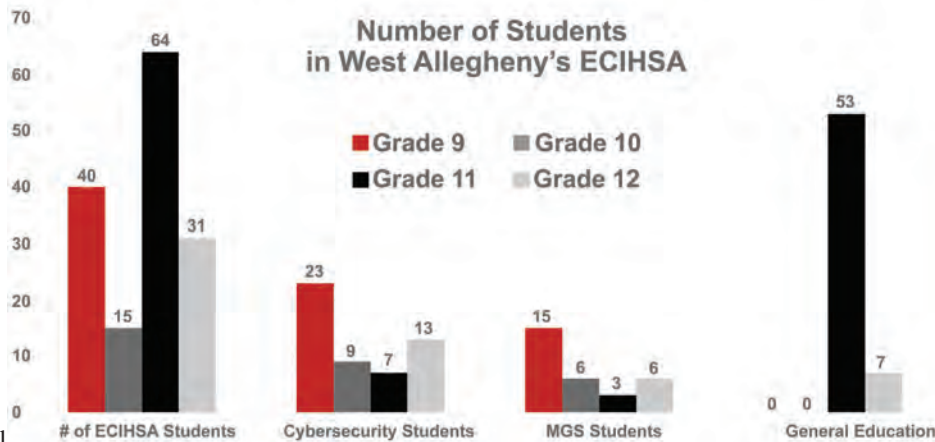
transferrable to most other colleges and universities, which support both two-year college and four-year college commitments.

We currently have 10 West Allegheny teachers certified as CCAC adjunct professors with the number growing to 14 in 2019-2020. This school year, students have access to college credit for 12 different

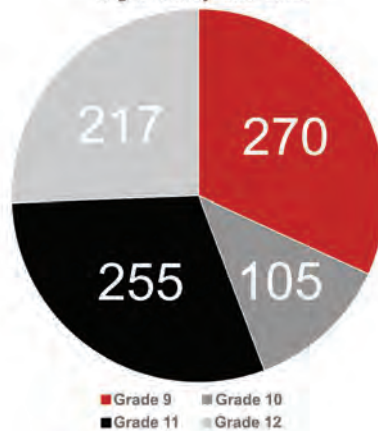
courses. The cybersecurity certificate consists of 25 college credits earned in four West Allegheny courses. The cybersecurity associate degree offers 68 college credits earned in 13 West Allegheny courses. Multimedia game simulation offers 27 college credits in six West Allegheny courses, and an associate degree of 62 college credits in 13 West Allegheny courses. All courses are taught by West Allegheny teachers who are certificated as CCAC adjunct professors. We currently have 29 students enrolled to complete the cybersecurity certificate program with another 23 students enrolled in dual enrollment cybersecurity courses. We also have 20 students enrolled in the MGS certificate and/or associate degree

program with another 10 students in MGS dual enrollment courses. Sixty students are taking advantage of dual enrollment general education courses. Eight students are enrolled in both cybersecurity and MGS certification courses. Our 150 students represent enrollment in 847 college credits for the fall 2018 registration. We anticipate that this number will grow as we enroll in spring registration in January 2019.

Number of Students in West Allegheny's ECIHSA



847 College Credits for Fall of 2018 Registration by Grade Level



Superintendent's Message, cont.

As an added incentive, our students earn college credits at free or significantly reduced tuition, ranging from \$0 to \$56.50 per course NOT per credit. CCAC's 2018-2019 credit cost is \$114 or \$342 per course.

Additionally, we are working on designing a mechatronics technology certificate consisting of 30 college credits across five West Allegheny courses for the 2019-2020 school year. The chart contains first year fall ECIHSA data.

We are incredibly proud of the program's first semester enrollment rates and look forward to the advancements this program will offer our students as well as the incredible cost-savings passed on to our parents. We are excited to continue to grow opportunities for our students to bridge post-secondary endeavors while preparing them to persist.

Dr. Jerri Lynn Lippert,
Superintendent

Hayes receives SRO of the Year award

Each year at the Students Against Destructive Decisions State Conference, event coordinators nominate a School Resource Officer of the Year. At this year's conference November 5, West Allegheny's SRO, Sgt. Michael Hayes, was named the recipient of the award for the 2018-2019 school year. Hayes was recognized for exemplifying the key characteristics of an SRO, as well as for dedicating his time to not only SADD, but to West Allegheny schools and the community as a whole.



South Fayette SRO Jeff Sgro and Pennsylvania SADD representative Felicity DeBacco-Erni present the SRO of the Year Award to Sgt. Mike Hayes.

Speech & Debate team earns prestigious recognition

The Speech & Debate team continues its tradition of excellence as it earned membership in the prestigious National Speech and Debate Association's Societe de 300. Because the West Allegheny chapter achieved a total of 300 or more degrees during the 2017-2018 school year, it has ranked in the top four percent of schools nationwide. Students earn points and degrees based on competitive and service-related activities ranging from the Degree of Merit - with 25 or more points - to the Degree of Premier Distinction - with 1,500 or more points.

"This milestone is remarkable because it demonstrates outstanding commitment to teaching students essential life skills - including communication, research, listening, writing and organization," stated J. Scott Wun, National Speech & Debate Association Executive Director. "The hard work you have invested to achieve this distinction will pay dividends for years to come."



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

Elementary school redistricting to balance enrollment

Following a yearlong collaborative process, the board of school directors is set to vote December 12 on a redistricting plan that would balance both short- and long-term student enrollment across all three elementary schools. The plan, which will take effect at the start of the 2019-2020 school year, is intended to alleviate overcrowding at Wilson Elementary. Doing so will lower average class sizes and ensure academic program effectiveness while optimizing school capacity.

The redistricting plan impacts approximately 90 students enrolled in kindergarten through third grade at Wilson and Donaldson elementary schools. Students currently in fourth grade have the option to complete their fifth grade year in their existing school. Neighborhoods impacted include Forestbrooke, Highlands of Montour, Virginia Hills West, Pine Ridge Apartments, Dinardo Manor, Redwood Estates and Settlers Place Apartments, as well as homes between Route 22/30 and the municipal line. It will also affect homes between Logan and Kennedy roads off of Steubenville Pike but not homes on those roads. The proposed reassignment allows additional growth to occur over the next several years while balancing class sizes and optimizing student/teacher ratios, teacher effectiveness, and academic programming.

The plan rectifies a notable demographic shift reflected over the past several years in elementary enrollments. Wilson Elementary kindergarten enrollment is currently at 115 students. Comparatively, McKee Elementary is at 62 and Donaldson Elementary is at 89. That trend is forecasted to continue as new residential developments are completed in Findlay Township. If not corrected, this growth is anticipated to result in significant enrollment imbalances by the 2021-2022 school year when it is estimated that kindergarten through fifth grade totals at Wilson, McKee and Donaldson elementary schools would be approximately 657, 466 and 511, respectively. This imbalance creates inequity across the three elementary schools, particularly at Wilson where higher class sizes would cause collaborative spaces to be turned into classrooms and require consolidation of programs

into one classroom. This imbalance would also have significant staffing and budgetary implications.

A redistricting committee comprised of four board members and District administrators worked with Thomas & Williamson Program Management and Davis Demographics to complete a comprehensive demographic and facility study, which assessed approximately 15 to 20 conceptual redistricting scenarios. The

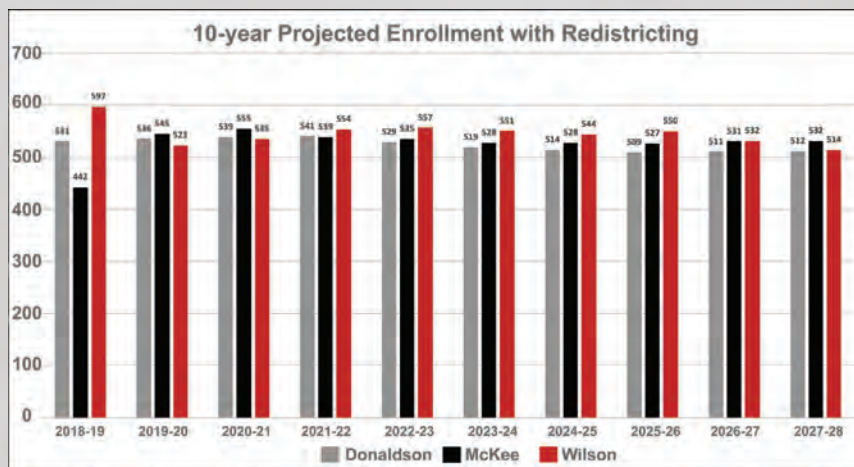
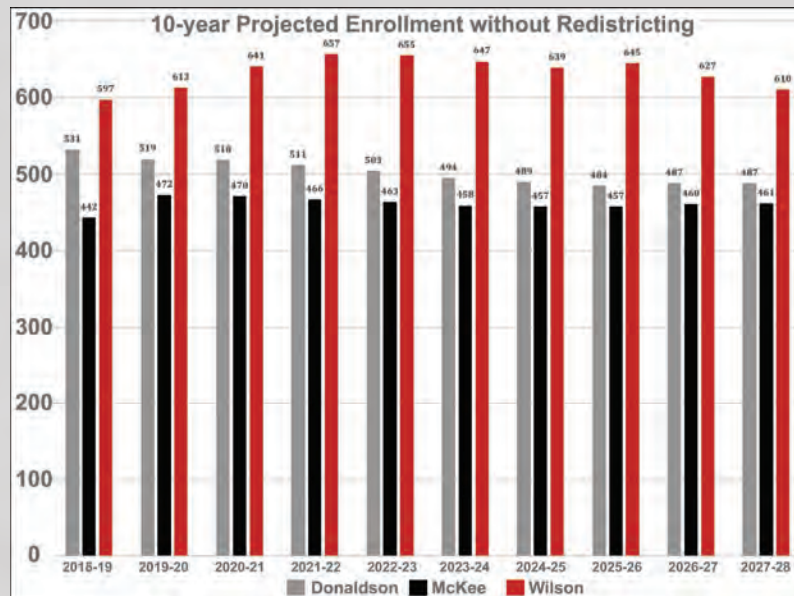
process evaluated scenarios using a multi-variable, metric-driven impact model that included family impact, academic programming, teacher effectiveness, functional capacity, financial impact, enrollment stability and long-term feasibility, with a concentrated focus on providing equitable and robust learning opportunities for all students.

The District also worked with Davis Demographics to establish a SchoolSite Locator™ website, which is a user-friendly website for parents to determine school assignments by address. West Allegheny's SchoolSite Locator provides elementary school assignments aligned to the 2019-2020 proposed redistricting plan.

In addition to making personal phone calls to each impacted family, District administration hosted three information meetings for parents in late October to share details about the proposed plan and address

concerns and related questions. Administrators also provided an extensive plan to support both students and parents as they will remain the focus through the transition.

"We are grateful to our dedicated Property and Supply Committee Board members who worked in collaboration with us, Thomas & Williamson, and Davis Demographics to bring the study to fruition," said Dr. Jerri Lynn Lippert, superintendent. "We would also like to acknowledge our three incredible elementary principals, Mrs. Patricia Nolan, Mrs. Rachel Gray and Mrs. Melissa Wagner, whose excitement and genuine care for our new students and families is comforting and encouraging. We are excited to welcome and support our impacted students and families as we move toward the 2019-2020 school year."



#WeAreStudentStrong

West Allegheny hosts 39th Annual Cavalcade of Bands



For the 39th year, the West Allegheny Marching Pride hosted the Annual Cavalcade of Bands in celebration of spectacular music, entertainment and tradition. The event was held October 6 and featured marching bands from Allerdice, Beaver, Cornell, Franklin Regional, Hempfield, Keystone Oaks, Quaker Valley

and West Allegheny high schools. Robert Morris University also performed. The event draws audiences from across the region.

Under the leadership of TJ Fox, the Marching Pride has reached record numbers of band members, with 140 students participating, 60 of whom are new this year.

High school students earn place in District 1 honors chorus concert

West Allegheny was well represented by Cerina Wichryk and Lindsey Sabo at the Pittsburgh Music



Cerina Wichryk and Lindsey Sabo perform at the District 1 honors chorus concert.

Educators Association District 1 honors chorus concert at Baldwin High School on October 27. They were accompanied by high school chorus teacher Terisa Sharlow. There were 32 participating school districts with 123 students.

Stand Together members attend Pittsburgh Youth Advocacy Summit

Six seniors from Stand Together, along with advisors Erica Cicero and Meredith Gillo, attended the Pittsburgh Youth Advocacy Summit sponsored by the Health Activist Network. The summit focused on improving mental health supports for youth, with an emphasis on youth voice and empowering youth to make changes. Students had the opportunity to hear from a variety of speakers, network with students from various schools in the area, and engage in breakout sessions. The sessions focused on increasing mental health supports, breaking down barriers and reducing the stigma associated with mental health. Students also had an opportunity to present their ideas for reform to a panel of local politicians, policy makers and medical professionals - including mental health -



Attending the Pittsburgh Youth Advocacy Summit attendees were: (front) Abhilasha Raghuvanshi, Michael Cosnek, (back) sponsor Meredith Gillo, sponsor Erica Cicero, Madison Lisotto, Alex Tucker, Riley Tucker and Jacob Costantino.

#WeAreWestA

Oktoberfest celebrates German culture



Frau Zanella leads a round of the "Chicken Dance" during Oktoberfest celebrations.

On October 19, the high school German classes celebrated Oktoberfest with teachers Frau Zanella and Frau Patterson. True to the culture, there was great food, singing and dancing. The festivities wrapped up with a spirited sauerkraut-eating contest that ended in a close finish between Arielle Moulinie and JROTC instructor Maj. Erik Orient. Moulinie claimed bragging rights.

Family and Consumer Science Club hosts heartwarming winter clothing drive

The Family and Consumer Science Club partnered with Crossroads Church from October 22 through October 30 to hold a coat and winter items drive to serve District families. The club asked for donations of coats, hats, gloves, socks and boots for people of all ages and sizes.

A donation drop-off was located at Crossroads Church where area families were also encouraged to pick up needed items.



Students and teachers organize donated items prior to pick up.

Peer to Peer empowerment group kicks off the year strong

The Peer to Peer Empowerment Group kicked off the school year with two engagement opportunities designed to benefit the District and its students.

The group first traveled to the North Fayette Community Center for their first of two workshops of the 2018-2019 school year. They collaborated with students from Northgate, OLSH, Moon and Montour to discuss current issues facing their respective schools. They also discussed real-life scenarios where building positive

BELOW: Senior Amaka Joanis and junior Emma Hamm visit District classrooms to deliver recycling posters and can liners.



ABOVE: Peer to Peer students take a break from their workshop to gather on the balcony of the North Fayette Community Center.

relationships and being respectful can make an impact. They ended their day with a guest speaker Fred Hodges from Robert Morris University. Hodges encouraged students to believe in themselves and to embrace their unique traits. He stressed that adversity defines their identity.

Members of the Peer to Peer Empowerment Group also initiated a District-wide recycling program this school year. Rollouts at the respective schools began in early September at the high school and finished up in mid-October at the elementary schools. Students hand made 275 cardboard covers that were designed to encourage students and staff to place the correct items in the recycling bins. They also delivered flyers to each classroom and informed students about the importance of recycling.

Kennan Grabner and Sgt. Mike Hayes serve as the Peer to Peer Empowerment Group advisors.

Award-winning author visits classroom through video conferencing

Eighth grade students had the unique opportunity October 15 to participate in a video conference with award-winning teen writer Neal Shusterman. He is the author of the popular “Scythe” series and his new release, “Dry.” Students asked Shusterman about his books and his writing process. The multi-school event was sponsored by the Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures series and organized by teacher Jacob Minsinger.

Author Neal Shusterman engages in a question and answer session with students.



Bestselling author shares poignant life story with middle school students



ABOVE: PTA president Sara DeMaria, student Macie Wingert, assistant principal Megan Huchko and principal Dr. Frank Hernandez present a donation to Salva Dut (second from right) for his foundation Water for Sudan.

Middle school students were excited to welcome New York Times bestselling author of “A Long Walk to Water” Salva Dut on October 11. Dut shared his story of how he became one of the lost boys of Sudan, refugees who covered the African continent on foot in search of their families and a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship, from loneliness, to an attack by armed rebels, to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Dut is a survivor and a role model. He shared his message of never giving up and not taking such things as food, family and a home for granted.

BELOW: Eighth-grader Caleb Vansprosen was one of several students who stayed after Salva Dut’s presentation to meet the author and have a book signed.

This unique opportunity was made possible by seventh-grader Macie Wingert, who shared a simple act of kindness that was repaid by being granted the opportunity to meet Dut and have him speak at her school. Through a walk-a-thon sponsored by the PTA, Dut was presented with a \$1,000 donation to his foundation, Water for South Sudan. Following the discussion, the author signed books and met with students.



Fall Festival creates new traditions at WAMS

For the second year, the WAMS Fall Festival proved a huge success with over 300 students joining in a fun-filled night October 13. Students were invited to participate in games, dancing, snacks and, for the first time, a haunted hallway. To top off the night’s activities, sixth-grader Evan Kreg won a chance to give principal Dr. Frank Hernandez a red Mohawk. The night’s celebration was organized by the school and the PTA.



ABOVE RIGHT: Evan Kreg takes great pleasure in spray painting a red Mohawk on principal Dr. Frank Hernandez’s hair.

BELOW RIGHT: Sixth-graders Brient Moss and Evan Kreg take time out of the night to visit petting zoo animals.



#WeAreWestA

#WeAreInnovators&Designers

Mission: Possible encourages teamwork



Middle school students chose to accept the “Mission: Possible” challenge October 30 when they were asked to complete tasks focused on good habits for a successful second quarter. During advisor time, students were grouped with peers from all three grade levels to complete a puzzle with challenges to earn their key to success. The first five teams to turn in their keys were awarded prizes. It was a fun and engaging way to encourage teamwork while meeting new students and teachers.



TOP: Students collaborate to solve the Mission: Possible challenge.

BOTTOM: Puzzle pieces come together to create a good habits message.

Middle school students selected for music festival

West Allegheny was well represented at this year’s Mucho Macho Music Festival for Young Men on October 30. Six middle school students represented the District at the festival, which was held at McGuffey School District. Representatives from regional schools came together to perform under the direction of a guest conductor from Seton Hill University. The day concluded with an informal concert for family and friends.

Middle school students Garrett Jenkins, James Bozic, Liam Kilbourn, Brient Moss, Jack Campbell and Carson McKinney perform at the annual Mucho Macho Music Festival.



Pep rally celebrates middle school achievement



LEFT: Sign language students lead by singing the national anthem to kick off the assembly.



RIGHT: The middle school cross country team celebrates with a chant.

The middle school gym was rocking on October 5 when the entire school came together to celebrate outstanding academics, athletics, arts and attendance at the second annual fall pep assembly. Teacher Jess Henry produced a spirit video highlighting all of the school’s achievements throughout the first quarter while staff members performed a dance routine that entertained the crowd.

McKee families celebrate An Enchanted Night of Reading



Principal Melissa Wagner greeted students upon entry to the castle.

McKee families experienced a “happily ever after” evening at the Enchanted Night of Reading event November 8. The event was hosted by McKee staff and featured a professional storyteller, a charming book fair, an enchanted eatery, special guest readers and a castle photo booth. The McKee Student Council hosted a table where families were encouraged to donate nonperishable items for the West Allegheny Food Pantry. The event promoted the importance of early literacy and a love of reading.



Teachers Brandi Short and Renae Castellucci dressed the part.



An elaborate castle and drawbridge were created as an entry to the enchanted event.

Meteorologist visits Wilson classroom

Students in Bob Meehan’s third grade class at Wilson had the unique opportunity October 19 to visit with Fred McMullen, a meteorologist from the National Weather Service. He shared a weather presentation that included videos, pictures and interactive websites depicting different types of weather, the water cycle, weather tools, severe weather precautions, and the effects of high and low pressure on weather systems.

Wilson students gather around meteorologist Fred McMullen.



Wilson students win chance to Silly String Principal Gray

It was an opportunity of a lifetime when students from Bob Meehan’s class at Wilson Elementary won this year’s PTA read-a-thon and got a chance to Silly String their principal, Rachel Gray. Mayhem ensued on October 26 as Gray was covered in plastic and students unleashed the colorful string. The entire school was on hand to witness the fun reward.

Wilson Elementary Principal Rachel Gray was a good sport as she was covered in Silly String by students.



#WeAreTeacherProud

Donaldson kindergarten students demonstrate caring

Students in Sara Augustin's kindergarten class at Donaldson Elementary have taken the #WACARES theme to a new level by adopting a "Grandma" who lives in a nearby nursing facility. Augustin's goal is to provide an opportunity for students to perform KIND deeds for their adopted grandma as an outreach and service project.

For Halloween, students gathered treats and made special cards that were delivered to their grandma, who was elated and touched by the generosity of each child and loved the creativity and caring that went into each card. Because they are unable to visit in person, the class communicated with her through FaceTime as she thanked each one of them for their thoughtful gift.

The class plans to communicate with their adopted grandma at least once a month through FaceTime and to share treats and gifts with her during the winter and spring holidays.



The adopted grandma of Sara Augustin's kindergarten class shows her appreciation for their caring and thoughtful gestures.

Red Ribbon Week celebrated across the District

Throughout the week of October 23, schools across the District celebrated Red Ribbon Week. This year's theme was: Your Future is Key, So Stay Drug Free. The annual campaign is recognized nationally and promotes the importance of making good life choices. In addition to hosting various fun days at the elementary schools, students learned about the impact drugs can have on individuals as well as their family and friends.

McKee students pose for the Red Ribbon photo booth.



Wilson's Busy Bean Café teaches lifelong lessons

Wilson's Busy Bean Café is much more than a coffee shop; it has become a catalyst for many student life lessons. Launched in February by learning support teacher Darla Cowburn and a team of helpers, the Busy Bean Café is a coffee cart that makes its rounds every Friday morning manned by students with disabilities. The small business started with hand-delivered letters to businesses in the community requesting donations. True to West Allegheny tradition, the upstart was flooded with generous donations while parents played an instrumental role in helping to prepare the cart.

As the students began earning funds, they purchased color-coded coffee cup holders to help with the coffee and hot chocolate preparation. Students deliver and collect order forms each week to keep the business organized and maintain funds while taking ownership and learning valuable skills that will carry over to real world situations.

"The District mission statement proved beneficial in planning and preparing for The Busy Bean," said Cowburn. "It states: 'The mission of West Allegheny School District, a leader in quality education, is to ensure that each student acquires the necessary knowledge and skills to be a responsible citizen, prepared for life-long learning and employment.' This year, West A Cares ties nicely into our Busy Bean Café as we give back to our community by donating some of the funds we have earned from the support of our teachers and staff at Wilson."

The Busy Bean Café plans to donate monies earned to families in need at Christmas and throughout the year. The first donation was made to Wilson's PTA for their purse bingo gift card baskets. The students are very proud to support the community and school.

Busy Bean students and staff proudly take to Wilson halls with their mobile coffee cart.



West Allegheny athletes make history in fall season



ABOVE: The boys soccer team proudly lays claim to the state championship trophy after a 4-0 win in Hershey.

Several West Allegheny teams continued the Indian's tradition of excellence while making school history this fall season.

The boys soccer team made history by claiming the Class 3A State Championship title in a commanding 4-0 win over Strath Haven High School on November 16. Traveling to Hershey for the final, the team was coming off an overall record-setting season of 23-2-0. They came back from a WPIAL Championship loss against Franklin Regional to defeat them in the PIAA semi-finals in a nail-biting 2-1 win to move them on to the final round. This was the first PIAA championship win for West Allegheny's soccer program.

In Bob Palko's final season as head coach, the football team once again advanced to the final round of the WPIAL 5A tournament following a 42-28 upset over top-ranked Gateway High School. At the time of this writing, the Indians are slated to face off against Penn Hills on November 23 in a showdown to claim the WPIAL title.

The girls soccer team made the most of their inaugural post-season appearance with a 6-0 victory over Laurel Highlands in the first round of the playoffs. Their history-making season ended in a 3-1 quarterfinal loss to neighboring district South Fayette.

Girls volleyball returned to the WPIAL playoffs where they fell to Kiski in the opening round after another winning season.

The fall season also saw the girls tennis team advance to post-season play in 3A team tennis as they won their opening match 4-1 over Chartiers Valley but were defeated in the bracket by Shady Side Academy.



ABOVE: Coach Bob Palko congratulates his team on making it to the WPIAL championship game after defeating Gateway.



The girls soccer team made history by advancing to WPIAL playoffs this past season. PHOTO BY BLINK OF AN EYE PHOTOGRAPHY

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Holiday Guide

Festive events in and around your area

Light-Up Events

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

Meander through this forested light up in Clinton, through Jan. 6

Twenty-five years ago, longtime Clinton residents Patty and Lloyd Faux started organizing a Christmas light-up display in Clinton Park. Today, this one-mile drive-through holiday extravaganza spans just about every Christmas

theme there is, and then some. The route winds through Clinton Park's scenic

woodlands area and gives spectators the feeling of dashing through a twinkling, magical forest. The entrance to the park is just off Route 30.

The all-volunteer effort to get the display's hundreds of decorations set up gets off the ground in September, shortly after the park closes for winter. The \$10 entrance fee per car goes right back into the community, via a committee that runs the light up. Those dollars address a variety of needs in the community throughout the year. Various community organizations, residents and businesses also sponsor a Christmas tree display toward the end of the drive.

This year's light up is open every evening from 5-10 p.m. through Jan 6, including on holidays. Pets and cars are not permitted those evenings.

For more, find Christmas Light Up Celebration on Facebook.



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

Rock out to this high-tech holiday light up at Pittsburgh Technical College, Dec. 5-Jan. 2

Every October, students and faculty from the School of Energy and Electronics Technology at Pittsburgh Technical College begin working on a two-hour long holiday music and light show that illuminates the college's 2,500-square-foot campus pavilion with more than 20,000 individual lights. This



Each year, Pittsburgh Technical College students turn the pavilion on the college campus into a light show set to music on the school's radio station.

year marks its seventh annual show and 40

new songs have been added to the play list, which now exceeds 100 selections. Take a drive to the Pittsburgh Technical College campus off Oakdale Road to find the display. Then tune to 89.5 FM on the radio. You can enjoy the show from your car or walk around for an immersive view. **The show debuts Dec. 5 and continues through New Year's Day.** Visit PTcollege.edu for more.

Celebrate this Christmas

Tree Lighting in North Fayette, Dec. 7

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

Seniors, take a trip to Oglebay, Dec. 5

Attention seniors: want to take a trip to Oglebay to see its famous light display? **Then sign up for this bus tour that will depart from Lafayette Square at 2:30 p.m.** You'll travel to the Wilson Lodge Resort, where you'll enjoy browsing the shops before stopping for dinner and enjoying The Ron Retzler Holiday Show. After that, you'll get a tour of Oglebay Lights display. Tickets are \$89. Reserve your spot by calling Kathie at the Lifespan Senior Resource Center in Imperial at (724) 218-1669.

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Concerts and shows



Enjoy an old-fashioned holiday staple in the heart of Carnegie



Stephanie Hrabar plays the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy in this year's production of the "The Nutcracker" at the Carnegie Music Hall.

The Andrew Carnegie Free Library and Music Hall opened in 1901 and, alongside concerts featuring world-class performers, it also puts on a couple of shows featuring local performers each year. Its performance of "The Nutcracker" is an annual holiday tradition that started 43 years ago. This year's show will feature over 60 dancers, many of them area students, ranging in age from 5 to adult. Performances will be held over two weekends **starting Dec. 7 and ending Dec. 16. Performances take place at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Matinee performances take place at 2 p.m. on Sundays.** Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$15 for seniors and children. Purchase tickets at the door. For more, call (412) 279-8887 or visit www.carnegieperformingartscenter.com.

Stop in for the "Sounds of the Season" DAR Meeting, Dec. 8

Each year, the local Jacob Ferree chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution hosts a special holiday-themed event for their December meeting. This year, **on Dec. 8**, they'll be welcoming students from the Mooncrest afterschool program who will be putting on a holiday chorus concert. **RSVP by Dec. 5** to Ruth Pickett at (724) 538-4623 or email rpickett12351@embarqmail.com. Have a question? Contact Melissa Moore at melissamdar@gmail.com.

Visit the South Hills for A Pittsburgh Irish Christmas, Dec. 9

The Bible Chapel has been operating in this area for some time, first establishing a campus at Pittsburgh Technical College before opening the doors to their own building in 2016 in Carnegie. This year, the multi-site church invites the public out to its South Hills Campus for A Pittsburgh Irish Christmas, which will feature fiery fiddlers, Christmas Carol sing-alongs, an orchestra and soloists. Two performances take place this year at **3 p.m. and 6 p.m.** Enjoy a Christmas program offering a seasonal celebration for the whole family. The concerts take place at 300 Gallery Drive in McMurray. Admission is free, and childcare is available for children up to age 5. Register for childcare at biblechapel.org.

Catch these Christmas concerts in Oakdale, Dec. 2 and 7

First, head out to the Oakdale United Presbyterian Church at 62 Hastings Avenue on **Dec. 2** and catch a traditional Christmas concert with the Dan Hanczar Orchestra at **6 p.m.** On **Friday on Dec. 7**, head back to Oakdale and visit The Rock Community Center in downtown Oakdale for a jazzy holiday salute to veterans by the TMG Big Band. Both concerts will feature an excellent cast of local musicians. For questions about the former, call (724) 693-8241. For the latter, call (724) 693-2777.

Enjoy a Christmas symphony, Dec. 9

The West Hills Symphonic Band is made up of professional and amateur musicians of all ages who play because they love music. Concerts are always free to attend and usually feature band arrangements of classical tunes. The band's last concert of the year is a holiday-themed show that takes place **Dec. 9 at 3 p.m.** at West Allegheny High School. Entitled "Love's Time is Christmas Time," the show will feature selections by Irving Berlin, Leroy Anderson and George Frederich Handel. Stay up to date at www.whsb.org.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL HOLL; WWW.HOLLPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



Check out this Christmas musical, Dec. 22 and 23

Once again, West Ridge Christian Church is putting on a Christmas musical. This year's production, "The Legend of Chop Chop Charlie: A Christmas Musical for All Ages" takes place at the West Allegheny High School Auditorium. **Show times are 7 p.m. on Dec. 22 and 11 a.m. on Dec. 23.** Both shows take place in the West Allegheny High School auditorium. This whimsical love story tells the tale of a free-roaming, un-convicted criminal who terrorizes the town of Sandwich until newcomer James Better, a free-thinking teenager, starts to ask questions. Reserve tickets at www.westridge.cc/cc or www.eventbrite.com.





West Allegheny Holiday School Concerts

Performances begin at 7 p.m. at the high school unless otherwise indicated.

Donaldson Band and Chorus Concert, Dec. 4,
Donaldson Fourth Grade Band, 6 p.m., Fifth Grade Band and Chorus, 7 p.m.

High School Band Concert, Dec. 6, 7 p.m.

Gold Card Holiday Breakfast, Dec. 7, 9:15 a.m., MS Show Choir and HS Wind Ensemble, HS Auditorium.

North Fayette Tree Lighting, Dec. 7, see page 36.

Kennywood Winter Lights, Dec. 8, 6-7:30 p.m.
MS Small Instrumental Ensemble and HS Brass Ensemble.

Seventh/Eighth Grade Bands, Dec. 10, 7 p.m.,
MS Jazz Ensemble.

Sixth Grade Band/Chorus, MS Percussion, Dec. 11, 7 p.m.

Seventh/Eighth Grade Choruses, MS Show Choir, Dec. 13, 7 p.m.

Wilson Fourth and Fifth Grade Bands with Fifth Grade Chorus, Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m., Fourth Grade Band, 7:15 p.m., Fifth Grade Band and Chorus, at Wilson Elementary.

HS Chorus, Show Choir, Handbell Choir, Dec. 20, 7 p.m.

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Create a Holiday Painting, Dec. 8

Swing by the Findlay Township Activity Center in Imperial at **11 a.m.** and create a holiday-inspired work of art. You'll get to pick from 10 different pre-drawn designs on eight-inch by 10-inch canvasses that you will then use to create your masterpiece. The cost is \$5 per canvas. To register, email lburns@findlaytpw.org or call (724) 695-0500.

VFW Post 7714 Children's Party, Dec. 8

The VFW Post 7714 in Imperial does a lot to support veterans, whether it's by helping them get the benefits they deserve or supporting military families. They're also hosting a community outreach event **on Dec. 8** that's open not just to members but also the general public. **Count on games and a visit from Santa.** **Stop by between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.** Call the post with questions at (724) 695-8866.

SNPJ Children's

Christmas Party, Dec. 16

Swing by the Imperial Room at SNPJ Lodge 106 with the kids and enjoy this holiday tradition. Count on food, games, music and a visit from the big man. **The fun kicks off at 1 p.m. and runs until 3 p.m.** For more, visit www.snpjimperialpa.com.

Get photos with Santa and play under the tree at The Mall at Robinson, through Dec. 24

- Once you've crossed some people off your list at The Mall at Robinson this holiday season, bring the kids to the rotunda near Banana Republic. There, you'll find a massive, two-story, holiday-inspired installation designed by Pittsburgh-based Schell Games and Chicago Scenic studios. Visitors get the unique experience of playing under a huge Christmas tree while waiting for pictures with Santa. Last year, this immersive, interactive experience included a photo box, snow globe, musical toys, interactive light-up pillows, a train and a life-sized magna-doodle for kids to play with while waiting to see the big guy.
- Outside of JC Penney's in the main lobby area, there will also be a children's train ride.
- Santa's hours this year are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday. He takes breaks those days between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. He'll also be available from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday but not between the hours of 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.**
- Want to skip the line? Check in virtually or make a reservation by purchasing a package online ahead of time at www.shoprobinsonmall.com.



While children are waiting to see Santa and Mrs. Claus (above) at The Mall at Robinson they can play under the tree (below).

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New Year's Eve Parties

You don't have to go far to celebrate New Year's Eve at one of these local venues.

SNPJ Lodge 106

The SNPJ Lodge 106 in Imperial will once again be hosting its annual New Year's Eve party in its Imperial Room. Dance in the New Year to live music by Guys Without Ties and then garner some good luck by feasting on pork and sauerkraut. The club will also be serving Fay's famous klobase sandwiches. Tickets are \$15 and can be bought at the door. There will be a cash bar open throughout the evening. Visit www.snjimperialpa.com for more.

Black Dog Wine Company at the Hankey House

Ring in the New Year by sipping award-winning wines at Black Dog Wine Company in the historic Hankey House farmhouse mansion in North Fayette. Black Dog, which took up residence at the Hankey House earlier this year, is currently selling tickets to this special New Year's Eve celebration. The night will feature live music and a DJ. Hors d'oeuvres and a dinner buffet is included with the \$50 ticket price. In addition to wine, a selection of Pennsylvania craft beers and specialty cocktails will be available. Count on a midnight toast as well. **Doors open at 7 p.m.**

The Hankey House was built in the 19th century and was at one time home to the owners of Hankey Baking Company Farms. John Hankey, who was of German descent, designed the rathskeller, with its raised plaster motifs that tell the history of bread making. After sampling wines with Black Dog owner and wine maker Mark Rozum, pick a bottle you like and explore this unique room along with the rest of the beautiful mansion.

For more, visit blackdogwinecompany.com. Find them on Facebook to view more of their events, like a **Murder Mystery Dinner on Dec. 14**. Tickets for that are \$50 per person and include both the show and a buffet dinner.



Check out historic Hankey House at Black Dog Wine Company this New Year's Eve and enjoy a drink in the rathskeller.

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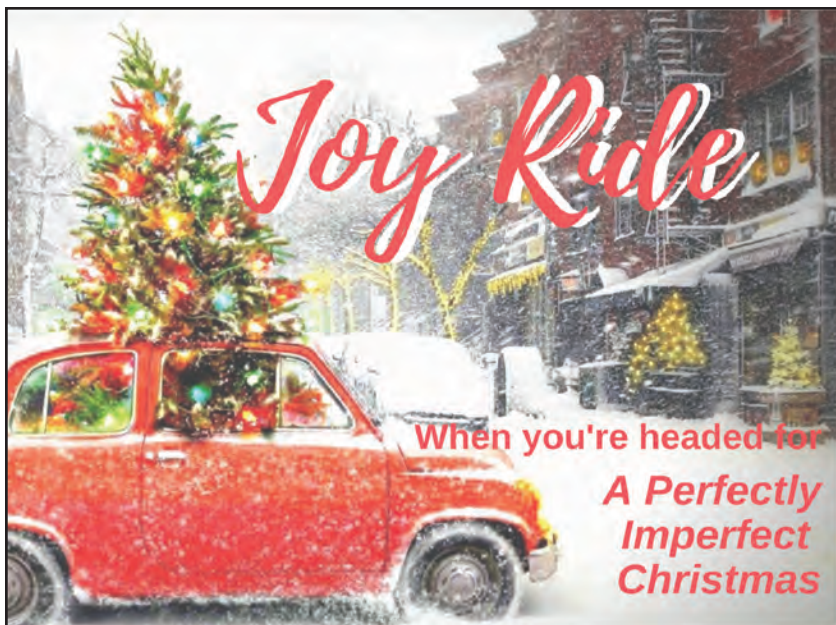
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When you're headed for
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No matter how much we plan ahead, the Christmas season is stressful. And, believe it or not, that is good news!

Good news? Yes. You can learn more at Mosaic Church this Christmas.

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Download the message
www.mosaicpgh.org/messages

www.mosaicpgh.org

North Fayette
Township



Philanthropies



Want to give back this holiday season? Then consider these local philanthropies and philanthropic efforts, a number of which have previously been featured in this publication because they directly impact residents in the West Allegheny community.

West Allegheny Food Pantry

About 200 area families rely on food supplied by the West Allegheny Food Pantry, which now holds distributions at Valley Presbyterian Church in Imperial. Volunteers and local donations help it continue to operate. To donate nonperishables, call (724) 695-1305. Checks can be mailed to PO Box 527, Imperial, PA 15126.

Heroes Supporting Heroes

Heroes Supporting Heroes was initially started by area reservists who wanted to help the families of deployed military personnel. Today, their mission has expanded to include area seniors and veterans. West Allegheny Workcamp, a project of Group Mission Trips, also now operates under HSH's nonprofit umbrella. Every two years, the work camp helps those in need across the area with free home repairs. To donate and learn more, visit www.heroessupportingheroes.org.

Toys for Tots Drop-off at VFW

The VFW Post 7714 is once again helping the Marine Corps. with its mission of ensuring every child gets a present this holiday season. The VFW is asking for new, unwrapped toys for children through

age 12. Toys can be dropped off at the post at 7971 Steubenville Pike during regular business hours between 2 p.m. and 10 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

A collection box is located inside the front entryway in the vestibule. **The last day for drop-offs is Dec. 7.** Call the post with questions at (724) 695-8866.

Western Allegheny Community Library

The Western Allegheny Community Library has gone through plenty of changes since it moved from its cramped space on Steubenville Pike to its current location in the former Amcom building five years ago. Today, it's a valuable community resource that serves as a meeting place for area families and book clubs. It offers STEM programming to encourage early childhood education and gives teens a venue to meet to discuss topics of interest. The library has even been recognized with Allegheny County's first-ever Gold Star Library designation. Most recently, the library expanded its teen services department, got a new roof and wrapped up work on its outdoor Backyard area. Next year, it's hoping to update its security equipment and install handicap-accessible doors. To donate, visit westernalleghenylibrary.org.



Lifespan

LifeSpan operates a senior center at 540 Penn Lincoln Drive in Imperial, along with seven other community centers throughout southern Allegheny County. As the aging population grows, government and private funding sources are decreasing. Donations and volunteers help Lifespan continue to offer its services to area seniors. Here are some ways to donate:

• **Meals on Wheels/Home Delivered Meals** - Donations and volunteers provide meals for seniors. Contact Judy: (412) 464-1300 x 133.

• **Memorial Donations** - Donations made in memory of a loved one who received services from Lifespan. Contact Joyce: (412) 464-1300 x 102.

• **Sweet Holiday Wishes Cookie Campaign** - Help provide seniors with a holiday tradition they love. Donate two to three dozen homemade holiday cookies **no later than Dec. 10.** Around 365 dozen cookies are needed in order to distribute half of a dozen homemade treats to brighten each senior's holiday season. Contact Betsy at the Imperial Center at (724) 218-1669.

For more, visit at www.lifespanpa.org or call (412) 464-1300.

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LIBRARY PROGRAMS & SPECIAL EVENTS

ONGOING PROGRAMS

PAWS FOR READING

Sunday, December 9, 1:30—3:30 p.m.

This program encourages children to practice reading aloud by providing a furry, non-judgmental, certified therapy dog with eagerly listening ears. Children who read with therapy dogs learn positive associations with the practice and over time may find their ability and confidence improved. Register online for your 30-minute appointment. For new & independent readers.

DINE TO DONATE @ CELEBRATIONS

Thursday, December 13

Enjoy an evening out and support your library—it's a win-win! Celebrations Banquet, Bar & Grill is hosting a "Dine to Donate" at 8110 Steubenville Pike in Imperial on December 13. A portion of sales will benefit your library. Check our website for specifics!

BLOOD DRIVE @ THE LIBRARY

Saturday, December 15, 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

This holiday season—give the gift of life! Central Blood Bank (aka Vitalant) is once again holding a Blood Drive at the library. Donations are greatly needed this holiday season. Stop by the library to sign up and get a free "ugly Christmas sweater" long-sleeve t-shirt (while supplies last)! Appointments recommended; walk-ins welcome. All participating donors will also receive a special gift. Look for details on donor eligibility online & sign up today to participate in this worthy cause!

GAME DAY @ MT. LEBANON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Saturday, December 15, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Bring your friends and join us for our special GAME DAY! Bring games you own or try out our board, card, & RPGs games. You can even check out the games you enjoy! For teens & adults.

FLAG RETIREMENT DROP BOX

Scout Troop 830 has recently provided a "Flag Retirement Drop Box" at WACL. You can deposit your old or damaged flags in the box located in the entrance of the library any time during open hours. They will be disposed of properly and respectfully in a joint effort by Troop 830 and the VFW.

LIBRARY HOLIDAY HOURS

Monday – Wednesday, December 24 – 26: Closed for Christmas

Monday, December 31: Close at 4:00 p.m. for New Year's Eve

Monday, January 1: Closed for New Year's Day

The book drop is available 24/7 for your returns. Plus, download the "WACL Mobile" app for access to your library everywhere, all the time! We wish everyone a safe & happy holiday season.

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

ADULT

Bookworms

1st Wednesdays, 1:00 p.m.

We Be Book'N Book Club

3rd Thursdays, 6:00 p.m.

Anime & Manga Club

4th Mondays, 6:00 p.m.

TEEN

Teen Anime Club

Mondays, 4:30 p.m.

Teen D&D

Tuesdays, 4:30 p.m.

Teen Maker Lab

Wednesdays, 4:30 p.m.

YOUTH & FAMILY

Baby Circle Time

Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m.

Little's Storytime

Tuesday & Wednesday, 10:30 a.m.

Sensory Storytime

Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.

Play K

Tuesdays, 1:00 p.m.

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Sunday: 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.



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Findlay Parks and Rec.

Register for any of the following programs by calling Findlay Township Parks and Recreation at (724) 695-0500 x 246 or by emailing dlarson@findlaytp.org, unless otherwise indicated. Programs take place at the Findlay Township Community Center unless otherwise indicated.

Semi-Super Morning Bingo, Fridays, Jan. 25, Feb. 22, March 29, April 26, May 24, doors open 9 a.m., see page 17.

Annual Indoor Flea Market, March 9, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., see page 17.

Valentine Chocolate Tasting, Feb. 10, 1 p.m., see page 17.

Yoga for Beginners (and Beyond), Fridays, 6:30-7:30 p.m., \$5/class, (724) 695-1976.

Senior Yoga and Qi Gong, Thursdays, call for more and to register: (724) 695-1976.

Walk 15, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6-7 p.m., cardio workout for all levels, call or email to register: kuziofjr@gmail.com.

North Fayette Parks and Rec.

Programs take place at the North Fayette Community Center at Donaldson Park, unless otherwise noted. Visit www.north-fayette.com or call (724) 307-3725 for more information or to register.

Christmas Tree Lighting, Dec. 7, 6:30 p.m., see page 36.

Sports and Fitness (Adult)

Tai Chi Ch'uan, Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Saturdays, 9 a.m.

Yoga, Sundays, 12:15-1:15 p.m., Wednesdays, 7-8 p.m.

Insanity, Mondays, 9:45 a.m.-10:45 a.m.

Body Sculpt, Mondays, 6-7 p.m.

Boot Camp, Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m. and Saturdays, 10-11 a.m.

Power and Punch, Tuesdays, 6-7 p.m.

PiYo, Wednesdays, 6-7 p.m., Fridays, 9-10 a.m.

Adult Volleyball League, Tuesdays, sfox@north-fayette.com.

Pickle Ball, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8-10 a.m., Fridays, 9-11 a.m., 5-7 p.m.

Seniors

Senior Luncheons, second Wednesdays, RSVP to (724) 307-3725, email dhildebrand@north-fayette.com to receive monthly senior newsletter.

Water Walking, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, 6-8 p.m., Donaldson Elementary.

Water Aerobics, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5-6 p.m., Donaldson Elementary.

Fitness Center and Walking Track, available to members during open hours.

Youth

Developmental Volleyball League, ages 9-15, Wednesdays, through Jan. 30.

Indoor Flag Football, ages 6-14, Saturdays through Feb. 23.

Youth Indoor Soccer League, ages 6-7, Thursdays, Jan. 3-March 21.

Youth Indoor Soccer League, ages 8-9, Mondays, Jan. 7-March 25.

Preschool, ages 2-4, kromano@north-fayette.com.

PALS, recreational activities for individuals with special needs, email dhildebrand@north-fayette.com to be added to email list and for upcoming events.

Afterschool Programming, Monday-Friday, 3:30-5:30 p.m., K-8 programs provide a safe environment for children to come to after school, transportation provided from schools to community center when school is in session, register online.

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- Bible Chapel**, p. 42, biblechapel.org
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- Clearview FCU**, p. 9, 800.926.0003, clearviewfcu.org
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- Oakdale Youth League**, p. 24, see ad
- Ohio Valley Hospital**, p. 7, 412.250.2600, www.ovgh.org
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- Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce**, p. 23, 412.264.6270, www.paacc.com
- Pittsburgh Technical College**, p. 13, 1.800.784.9675, www.ptcollege.edu
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The blue notice

"If you can dream it, you can do it." ~ Walt Disney

This past June, Connie Orris Josey was doing what she loved most: biking on the Panhandle Trail. While stopping for a few minutes at the Walker's Mill trailhead, she saw a blue notice on the billboard. It read: "2018 Bike Tours." Line five read: "September 16-22 Pittsburgh to Washington DC." Her thoughts jumped into overdrive.

"This is what I've wanted to do for over 22 years," she thought.

Connie put the blue notice into her pocket, thinking, "I'm gonna be 75. What chance do I have to ever do this again?"

The next day she called and signed up.

Ted, Connie's husband, had already retired his bike, but when Connie told her niece Marva Josey Shurko, 72, of Oakdale, Marva immediately said, "Count me in."

Marva called her friend Beth Baker, 68, and told her about the tour. Beth had hip surgery in March but she could ride her bike. When she rode, she says, "Everything went away." When she said, "Yes," it made them a trio.

As the time grew closer, Connie said, "The scarier it became. We [three] questioned, can we do this? 339 miles?"

They considered dropping out.

"You can do this," Connie's grandson, Andrew Josey, 29, from Carnegie told her. "Don't be a wimp."

Day one on Sunday, Sept. 16 was sunny and bright. Nine bikers and their tour guide Mike Bruno met at the fountain at Point State Park in Pittsburgh. Dreams became reality as they pedaled off on their first 59 miles.

The trio calls the group "The Perfect 10."

"Total strangers," Connie said. "We fell in love with every single one."

That first night they pedaled to their hotel and were so tired they skipped dinner.

"We were too tired to chew," Connie explained.

On day two they awakened to pouring rain. Hurricane Florence had hit just days before the tour and was winding down. The rain continued for the first 22 miles of trail.

"It didn't matter," Beth said. "The trees above the trail created a canvas, the rain was more like a mist falling on us. Beauty was all around mile after mile."

Warm sunshine returned that afternoon and for their remaining 258 miles.

"Riding through the mud and puddles," Marva said, "Connie was like a child; we could see her laughing. She was the funniest. We heard her say, 'This is so fun.'"

Marva agreed, saying, "It makes you feel like a kid again. We never got tired while biking."

At places further south the mud was ankle deep. They had to pedal fast or they would slip and slide. Marva said, "We prayed to see a puddle to ride through to get rid of some mud from our tires."

Josey counted 84 trees down and then stopped counting. One century-old oak tree had fallen across the trail. Bikers had to help each other hoist their bikes over it and then scale the fallen oak. Some other bikers on the trail turned around, but not the 10. No way were they going to quit.

"No matter how many before, and how many after, they won't experience what we went through, but it was so wonderful," Connie said.

At historic Paw Paw Tunnel in West Virginia, the bikers entered into total darkness and turned on their headlights. A pinpoint of light could be seen at the tunnel's end. The trio walked their bikes while others rode along the path that mules once used to pull boats on a canal through the mountain. Using their bike lights, the trio marveled at the architecture.

"Don't you just love seeing all these old people on the trail?" Marva said at one point.

"We are the old people," Connie said. "What are you talking about?"

"I just see everybody happy," Marva said.

On the morning of day seven, Connie said, "We are almost there." Her grandson kept in touch every day via cell phone.

"What's it like?" he asked, to which Connie answered, "A piece of cake."

Finally, after their final 35-mile stretch, the Perfect 10 hit the Mile Zero marker in Washington, D.C. Connie saw someone in the crowd of people walking her way. She thought, "that guy looks a lot like Andrew." Then she heard a loud, "Gram" and, surprise, it was.

"Oh my God. It was the best feeling in the world to see him there!" Connie says.

Andrew had another surprise in store: 10 bottles of champagne, each decorated with a bike charm attached to a key chain. That brought everyone to tears.

When asked why he did this, Andrew answered, "My Gram has always been there for every single thing I ever did. This is her one thing."

Gram cried.

"One class act," is what their guide, Mike, called it.

Connie summed it up, "Nothing on the trip was wrong. If it was wrong, it was right 'cause we were doing what we loved to do."

The trio's Christmas wish is that they "will be able to do another bike run in 2019." Marva's dream is to someday bike in Europe. Connie suggests, "Keep pedaling. Keep moving. Make that a Christmas gift you give yourself."

Beth adds, "Every day is a gift."

Merry Christmas and Blessings in the New Year.

The "Perfect 10" bike group celebrates at the Mile Zero marker in Washington, D.C. Connie Orris Josey is pictured fourth from right in the back row. Marva Josey Shurko is pictured kneeling and Beth Baker is at far right in gray.

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