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Fire Breaks Out at Local Business in Washington, NJ



Photo Courtesy of: Channel 69 News Helicopter

Washington Township Fire Department, in Washington NJ, responded to a working 3 alarm Commercial Structure Fire at 3:39pm, on August 24th, at the Angry Dad Draught House on Rt. 31 North in Washington Township (NJ). The fire broke out in the kitchen. Multiple Mutual Aid Companies from both Warren and Hunterdon Counties assisted us at the scene as well as with cover assignments. The Owners vow to rebuild.

A Closer Look at Supporting Student Safety

Families need to be able to trust their children will be safe when they're at school, and students deserve to focus on their learning. Continuing the Senate's leadership of efforts to provide safe learning environments for students, \$100 million was included in this year's state budget for all school districts to address school safety, security needs and mental health concerns. An additional \$20 million for safety grants is also made available to nonpublic schools that apply by Thursday, Sept. 26. Applications for both grant programs are available online.

New this year, schools may use their funding for the purchase of lockable cellphone bags to benefit students' mental health by giving them a much-needed break from their mobile devices while in *SCHOOL cont'd on pg 2*

Bangor Kicks Off Football Season With A Match Up Against Saucon Valley



Bangor took on Saucon Valley High School in football on August 23rd. Bangor lost, 16 to 7. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Pen Argyl Wins With a 3-0 Shut Out Over Bethlehem Catholic



Pen Argyl took on Bethlehem Catholic in field hockey on August 23rd. Pen Argyl won, 3 to 0. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press





SCHOOL

Continued from page 1

school. Over the last decade there has been a sharp drop in children's mental health, which directly correlates to the increased use of cellphones and social media apps. The cellphone bags are another tool schools may choose to use if they feel it's appropriate based on their area, school board and parents' perspective.

Recently passed legislation calls for every school

district in Pennsylvania to have a school security officer who has completed armed security training to protect students. The security presence will consist of at least one trained and vetted school security officer, which may be either a school police officer, school resource officer or school security guard.

See what other steps the Senate is taking in our work to strengthen Pennsylvania at www.pasenate.gov/strengtheningpa/

Photo by Dale Young/
The Free Weekly Press

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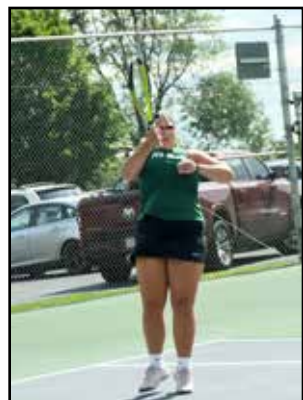
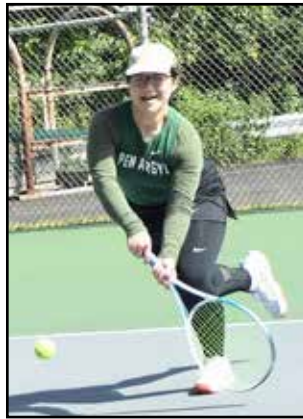
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PEN ARGYL (0) VS SAUCON VALLEY (5) GIRLS TENNIS

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PEN ARGYL (3) VS BETHLEHEM CATHOLIC (0) FIELD HOCKEY



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Slate Belt Regional Police Department's Special Service Unit (SUE) Finds New Home in Chicago



It's never too late to start a new chapter in your life.

Pictured above is Slate Belt Regional Police Department's Special Service Unit, (affectionately referred to as "Sue" by her SBRPD Family). "Sue" was used as a command post at various Slate Belt PD functions. For many years prior to

that, "Sue" was a working ambulance with the Plainfield Township Volunteer Fire Company, 36-82.

Recently, SBRPD sold "Sue" to the LIGHT the LINE Foundation in Chicago IL. The Light the Line Foundation was created by Ms. Elizabeth French, in memory of her daughter, Chicago Police Of-

ficer Ella Grace French #15013, who died in the line of duty, August 7, 2021. Members of The Light the Line Foundation flew from Chicago to Philadelphia, then rode a bus from Philly to SBRPD Headquarters to receive and drive "Sue" back to her new home in Chicago.

"Sue" is now the first-of-its-kind mobile

support unit, that will be deployed to Chicago police officers experiencing traumatic events while working in the field. Currently, "Sue" is serving officers who are working the National Democratic Convention and will work many other police incidents that occur daily in Chicago, Illinois.

We are happy that "Sue" has been given a new and honorable mission. A mission that is greatly needed and one that we hope spreads throughout the country. She will now aid the men and women who are always willing to assist others in their

times of need. Good luck "Sue" we are so very proud to have been part of your journey.

Looking to donate to a great organization? Consider LIGHT the LINE. Visit www.lighttheline.org for more details.

Statement From New Jersey Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. Latourette on The Passing of Congressman Bill Pascrell Jr.

With the passing of Congressman Bill Pascrell, New Jersey has lost a friend, statesman, and fierce advocate for improving and protecting public health, safety, and the environment we all share. As a storied mayor, state legislator, and congressional leader, Bill Pascrell fought tirelessly to ensure that our neighbors here in New Jersey and across the nation breathed cleaner air, drank cleaner water, and enjoyed quality parks and open spaces.

The truest of partners to me and my colleagues at the Department of Environmental Protection, Congressman Pascrell championed environmental policies and projects, securing the cleanup of legacy industrial pollution, revitalizing New Jersey communities, delivering climate and flood resilience infrastructure to protect our people and economy, and guaranteeing the protection of natural and historic treasures—like the Paterson

Great Falls that was so near to his heart.

We will be forever inspired by our happy warrior, who encouraged us to never give up on what is right.

Through our continuing work to serve the people and their environment, we will honor and carry forth Congressman Pascrell's legacy every day.



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DEP Accepting Applications for Environmental Education Projects in PA

Nearly \$1 million in grants available for projects that will foster environmental stewardship and encourage Pennsylvanians to play a role in protecting clean air and water

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has made nearly \$1 million available for projects that will promote environmental education and stewardship across Pennsylvania. Many of last year's awardees also supported people in environmental justice communities, communities composed of Pennsylvanians that are more threatened by climate change, air pollution, and water pollution.

DEP's 2025 Environmental Education Grants Program is accepting applications through November 15, 2024. Up to \$1,000,000 worth of grants may be awarded for environmental education projects that engage people about clean water and climate change, especially projects that focus on environmental justice areas. Eligible applicants include schools, colleges, nonprofit community and environmental organizations, county conservation districts, and businesses.

"Environmental Education grants are some of the best ways to teach people about the water they drink and the air they breathe. The projects that these grants support strengthen the bonds be-

tween people and their environment so they are able to make informed decisions and take responsible actions for their communities," said DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley. "These projects are especially important to communities that have been disproportionately impacted by pollution."

A free 2025 Environmental Education Grants Program webinar will be held on October 10, 2024, from 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM. DEP staff will provide proposal tips and instructions for completing required application forms. The program will conclude with a Q&A session. Registration by September 30, 2024, is required: 2025 EE Grants Program Webinar Registration.

Projects with a local focus may receive up to \$5,000 and regional or statewide initiatives may receive up to \$30,000. Projects that engage students and teachers from at least 60 Pennsylvania counties at three levels, local, state, and national, may be awarded up to \$65,000.

Funding is provided on a reimbursement basis. Projects must be implemented during the period July 1, 2025-June 30,

2026. Information about the grants program is available at Environmental Education Grants. Electronic applications must be submitted through the Keystone Login (first-time users will need to register).

The Environmental Education Grants Program has supported a wide range of activities from tours and workshops to hands-on field experiences and action projects. Go to 2024 EE Grant Awards for a listing of projects that were awarded funding in Spring 2024.

The Environmental Education Grants program was established by the Environmental Education Act of 1993, which mandates setting aside 5% of the pollution fines and penalties DEP collects annually for environmental education in Pennsylvania. Since the program began, more than 2,200 projects, totaling over \$14 million, have been awarded grant funds.

For more information, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's website, or follow DEP on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.

Bombshell Report Leads For Calls To Toughen Anti-Trafficking Laws in New Jersey

Assemblyman Michael Inganamort is renewing calls to toughen New Jersey's anti-trafficking laws after a bombshell report released Monday said the federal government has lost track of hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrant children.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General found that the Biden administration cannot account for 323,000 of the 448,000 unaccompanied migrant minors who crossed the border between October 2018 and September 2021. As of May 2024, 291,000 of those minors had never been served an immigration court date by federal authorities; another 32,000 had failed to show for scheduled hearings. The report said those numbers are likely much higher.

According to news reports, a whistleblower who worked with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—the department responsible for caring for these undocumented minors—told a House Judiciary subcommittee that these children were released to "qualified sponsors," who are often criminals, traffickers and members of

transnational criminal organizations. Under the Biden administration, the sponsor vetting process has been reduced to an over-the-phone interview. Once released to sponsors, the government agencies have no official process for tracking children.

"The DHS report makes it clear: These children 'who do not appear for court are considered at higher risk for trafficking, exploitation, or forced labor.' There's an alphabet soup of federal agencies that have released these children, an unknown number into the hands of criminals and traffickers," Inganamort (R-Morris) said. "What's more concerning is that the federal agents tasked with following up on these children's whereabouts are not doing their jobs. We must step up efforts here in New Jersey to combat this scourge and act where the federal agencies have grossly failed."

While the latest reports focused on minors, Inganamort said that in New Jersey, the National Human Trafficking Hotline has identified 3,882 victims of all ages of trafficking since 2007. There were 466 reported victims in 2021, the hotline's most recent statistics.

Inganamort said punishments in New Jersey must expand to include anyone who knowingly gains financially from

trafficking, a relatively new front in the fight against human trafficking. He introduced a bill (A198) in January that would see that these criminals are prosecuted and, depending on the circumstances, face steep fines and the possibility of life imprisonment for exploiting other human beings.

The assemblyman has also called for more focus to be placed on the dangers facing children. His Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Prevention Act (A3819) would require that manufacturers or sellers of devices with Internet access digitally block dangerous material, especially access to escort sites and known trafficking portals, or be fined tens of thousands of dollars. Consumers ages 18 and older could request in writing to have the blocking feature turned off by verifying their age and paying a one-time digital access fee. That money would help support the state's Commission on Human Trafficking.

"With the ever-evolving and sophisticated technology and software aimed at deceiving young people, we need to get in front of this and do what we can to prevent access to highly dangerous material," Inganamort said.

Both bills have been referred to the Assembly Public Safety and Preparedness Committee.

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Land of Make Believe Brings Worldwide Attention to Hope Township, NJ

Seventy years ago Land of Make Believe opened its gates as a family amusement park in tiny Hope Township, N.J. In fact, when Land of Make Believe opened up in 1954 Route 80 was still nothing more than a dream for northwestern New Jersey.

Seven decades later, Land of Make is still thriving, expanding its park over time to include thrill rides, attractions and a water park.

Within the past year, you could say that Land of Make Believe has hit the trifecta. The park, which has been honored by federal and state legislators, county and local officials, and industry organizations, has now been recognized with three huge designations that have given Land of Make Believe attention across the United States - and the world.

Quite amazing when you consider that Hope



had a mere 500 residents back in 1954 when the Land of Make Believe opened and Warren County had more cows than people. Pretty amazing, indeed when you consider that Hope today has only 1957 residents and is within the County of Warren and its

100,000 population. The trifecta started with Land of Make Believe being named the Most Iconic Amusement Park in the New Jersey, then was declared the No. 1 Amusement Park in New Jersey, and most recently was declared the World's Greatest.



fordable experience for those who come here."

What's the secret to how a small amusement park in Northwest New Jersey has gotten such recognition? It has kept loyal to the principles that were the foundation that created the American amusement park in the first place.

The Maier family found a home - and a business - in rural Hope Township and it continues to be a source of proud generations later.

"There is no other place like Hope, N.J.," said Maier. "We are so proud to be part of this community. Hope has the freshest air in New Jersey."

For more about Land of Make Believe visit www.lomb.com or at its Facebook page. Land of Make Believe remains open daily through Labor Day Weekend, including Monday, and then the Grand Finale Weekend, Sept. 7-8.

"Who would have thought that over 70 years there would have been this kind of transformation," said Christopher Maier, whose family has owned the park since its

inception. "But my mother and father had a vision of providing fun for the entire family that has stood the test of time. It's always been the intention to offer a safe and af-

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At Last, Nest Success For Common Terns in Pennsylvania

You know a species is facing hard times when an upgrade in status brings it only up to the “endangered” level. But that’s been the fate of the common tern in Pennsylvania.

Though never widespread – terns nest here only at Presque Isle State Park in Erie County – they were once regular breeders. Historical records from the 1930s reveal there were 100 breeding pairs on Gull Point, at the east end of the park.

Human interference ultimately chased those birds off, though, so that the species was considered “extirpated” – completely lost – from Pennsylvania by 1985. A single pair returned in 1999, moving the species up to the state’s endangered species list where they’ve remained ever since. Following invasive plant control to restore beach habitat, terns have attempted to nest on Gull Point. Since 2012, 21 common tern nests have been started there but failed.

Finally, though, there’s good news. For the first time in 60 years, common terns have

nested successfully in the Keystone State. On Saturday, Aug. 17, two tern chicks fledged at Presque Isle State Park.

That breakthrough – decades in the making – came about thanks to intervention and innovation.

Staff from the Game Commission’s Northwest Region office and Bureau of Wildlife Management’s Wildlife Recovery Division, Presque Isle State Park, Erie Bird Observatory and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy have worked together for decades to improve the beach habitat at Gull Point for the birds’ sake.

In recent years, it hasn’t been lack of habitat preventing terns from successfully nesting. The problem has been that, even when young terns hatched, they didn’t survive long because of the large number and types of predators that hunt on the beach. This includes hundreds of gulls, common nest predators quite willing to snap up a tern chick, that loaf nearby.

The outlook didn’t seem any better this year. A pair of terns returned to Presque Isle, but their



first nest failed. They then made a second nesting attempt. But, without help, it seemed clear this nest would meet the same fate as the 21 others since 2012.

“It was time to try something new in the recovery of this species,” said Lisa Williams, Game Commission Wildlife Recovery Division Chief.

Game Commission staff, led by Endangered Bird Specialist Patti Barber, came up with the idea of building an enclosure or predator guard – think of an open-roofed fort around the nest – to

keep predators out.

“It was a dicey plan,” Barber said. “With only a single nesting pair on the beach, these birds do not tolerate disturbance and are very likely to abandon the nest.”

Then, too, there was the question of whether offering such help at all was the right way to go. With responsibility for managing 480 species of birds and mammals in an interconnected food chain, the Game Commission does not typically step in to help one species of wildlife avoid predation. But, in this unique

case – one nest on a barren beach with very little protective cover, with literally hundreds of gulls staging nearby, and with 21 preceding nest failures over the years – staff deemed it was appropriate to act.

Just not too quickly.

Barber and co-workers in the Game Commission’s Southeast Region office modified a nest enclosure design used in Canada, downsizing it and devising a way to easily carry it to the beach site. It was built in stages around the nest over four days, giving

the birds time in between each visit to acclimate to it.

Biologists, meanwhile, monitored the birds daily to make sure they returned to incubate eggs rather than changing their behavior or care of the chicks. Days of nervous waiting followed. Why so nervous? A successful return of nesting common terns would not only be a test of the recovery partnerships working to bring a lost breeding bird back to the state, but also a success that can lead to more terns re-colonizing the site.

That time and patience proved the answer.

In the end, the eggs hatched and the young fledged, something unseen in Pennsylvania common terns since Cassius Clay became Muhammed Ali, the Beatles first came to America and Disney’s “Mary Poppins,” debuted to break box office records.

This is a landmark event in the Game Commission’s mission to conserve and protect a species for present and future generations.

“It’s amazing the things we can achieve when partners work together!” Barber said.

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Local Stylists Donate Free Haircuts to Children in Need



Stylists from the Mancuso Salon & Spa and The Village Mane Salon & Day Spa recently joined forces to donate free haircuts to more than 90 local children to help prepare them for the new school year. The free service, which also included a wash and style, was part of Project Self-Sufficiency's initiative to help prepare low-income families during the back-to-school season. The free haircuts served as the cul-

mination of the agency's Back-to-School effort, which also featured an interactive fair hosted by the Journey Family Success Center and Project Sussex Kids, the Sussex County Council for Young Children, at Project Self-Sufficiency, at an earlier date.

"Offering free haircuts to children has been a staple of Project Self-Sufficiency's Back-to-School initiative for many years," commented Project Self-Sufficiency Executive Director Deborah Berry-Toon. "We are overwhelmed by the generosity of these stylists who volunteered to work on their day off to assist so many students in need. The children were delighted with their experience, and they all look fantastic!"

"This has been a goal of mine for many years because there is a great need in our community," added Jacqueline Cox, co-owner of Mancuso Salon & Spa. "I am so thrilled that we could work with Project Self-Sufficiency to make this happen. The children were able to come here and receive the whole salon experience and do it on a day when most people in this industry have the day off. We made it an extra special experience for them."

Poll Workers Needed in Northampton Co. for Upcoming Presidential Election



The Northampton County Elections Office continues to actively recruit registered voters residing in the County to serve in poll worker positions for the upcoming General Election on Tuesday, November 5th.

Poll workers play a crucial role in facilitating elections in Northampton County. Their responsibilities include checking in voters at polling locations and setting them up with

a ballot. After the polls close, poll workers are responsible for delivering returns to county election officials. Their dedication ensures that our elections are fair, accurate, and legal.

New poll workers are provided training prior to the General Election and paid for their training time and work on Election Day. Northampton County poll workers may earn between \$175 and

\$200 for serving all of Election Day, depending on the poll worker's assignments and training. Typical Election Day hours are from 6:00 a.m. until after the polls close at 8 p.m. Individuals who bring supplies back to the Government Center receive additional compensation and mileage.

Registered voters interested in becoming poll workers in your community can email the Northampton County Elections Office at election@norcopa.gov or call 610-829-6260.

The PA Election Code also permits high school students 17 years of age to serve at the polls in specific capacities. Any 17-year-old high school student interested should complete this form and return it to the Elections Office.

Our democracy increases in strength the more we all participate.

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Children at the final BMCL Summer Fun Event enjoyed Games and Bubble Crafts at Weona Park. Story Hour at the library will begin on Wed. Sept. 11 at 10:30 am. All preschool children, accompanied by an adult, are welcome to participate. Call the library at 610-863-3029 to register.

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Northampton County Department of Public Works Opens Registration for Household Hazardous Waste Drop-Off Event

Registration for the 2024 Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off event will open on Wednesday, August 28, at 8:00 a.m. This event is only for Northampton County residents; online pre-registration is required. County residents may sign up for one appointment per household. Sign-ups are on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration often reaches capacity quickly, so residents are encouraged to register promptly and open an account with Eventbrite (www.eventbrite.com) before registration begins. A link to the event will be posted on the Northampton County Homepage.

The Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event will be held on Saturday, September 28, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Northampton Community College (3835 Green Pond Road, Bethlehem) and will be held rain or shine. For the safety of staff, you must

enter from the campus's Main Entrance on Green Pond Road.

Appointment times are in 15-minute increments. User instructions are available on the County's Environmental Services webpage. After successfully registering, a confirmation email will be sent by Eventbrite with a printable ticket attachment. If you need to change your confirmed time, you must delete or cancel your appointment on Eventbrite and re-register. There is no guarantee that an appointment will remain available if you cancel. Those who show up without an appointment will be turned away.

Acceptable waste must be generated in the home and not affiliated with any commercial business, contractor, nonprofit, organization, institution, or out-of-county residence. Staff has the right to determine and refuse unauthorized material.

To be admitted to the event, each participant



must:

- Show a printed ticket from Eventbrite or display the confirmation email on their smartphone
- Show proof of residency matching the contact information used for registration
- Arrive within their scheduled timeframe, not

before or after

- Only drop off accepted materials
- Only 50 gallons and 90 pounds of solid waste will be accepted per vehicle.

This is a no-contact event, which means drivers must remain inside their vehicles upon arrival.

The material must be accessible from the trunk, cargo area, or bed of a truck. Event staff will remove all items from those locations. Acceptable materials include paint products, automotive fluids, outdoor products (pesticides, herbicides, driveway sealers,

pool chemicals, etc.), and household products (lead acid car batteries, rechargeable, lithium or button type household batteries, fire extinguishers, flammables, adhesives, aerosols, etc.)

Unacceptable materials include electronics, appliances, Freon, scrap metal, explosives, ammunition, radioactive waste, fireworks, smoke/carbon monoxide protectors, medical waste, sharps, latex paint, alkaline batteries, gas cylinders, and helium tanks. A full list of unacceptable materials can be found on the 2024 event flyer as well as the County's Environmental Services webpage.

Household hazardous waste collection events are supported by Northampton County Recycling and Sustainability Funding in partnership with PA Dept. of Agriculture, PA Dept. of Environmental Protection and Waste Management Grand Central and Alliance landfills.

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LIVE MUSIC THIS WEEKEND AT OUR SISTER LOCATION

Hunter's Lodge
 64 Rt. 46, Columbia NJ
 Where **ELECTRIC SHADOWS**
 will be playing This Saturday,
 August 31st at 6:30pm



Music Will Be Outside at 6:30pm, Weather Permitting - Bring a Chair!
 (NOTE: Music Indoors at 8:30pm, If Raining)

Collaboration, Research and Development Critical to Combatting Alzheimer's

By Sen. Rosemary Brown (R-40)

More than 6 million Americans are diagnosed with Alzheimer's and each day, nearly 3,000 patients may progress from mild to moderate dementia due to the disease. Here in Pennsylvania, there are 280,000 individuals aged 65 and older who are living with this debilitating disease, and unfortunately that number is projected to grow significantly in the coming years. These statistics are startling and speak to the dire need to address this public health crisis and ensure patients have access to approved Alzheimer's treatments.

Many of us have been impacted by Alzheimer's in some way, shape or form – whether that's having a loved one diagnosed with the disease, or knowing someone who is a caretaker or provider for someone. We all know the physical, emotional and financial toll that managing this disease can take.

This is why I introduced Senate Bill 840, which has passed the Senate



and moved to the House Health Committee, to improve the way in which Pennsylvania addresses Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD). I encourage you to reach out to the House Health Committee and request passage of this important legislation prior to the end of the 2023-24 legislative session. Senate Bill 840 calls for the establishment of a permanent ADRD Division and ADRD Advisory Committee within the Pennsylvania Department of Aging that will be tasked with the

responsibility of bringing statewide stakeholders together on plan implementation, collaborating across state agencies, developing public-private partnerships, advocating for policies that strengthen Alzheimer's awareness and education, securing federal funding, and utilizing resources that meet the complex needs of Alzheimer's and dementia patients. Fostering collaboration and partnerships among agencies and departments is a critical step in combatting this public health crisis. In addition to Se-



nate Bill 840, I worked with Senate Appropriations and Senate leadership to include funding of \$1.9 million in the Pennsylvania state budget for the purpose of establishing the ADRD program.

Efforts at the state level will not alone combat ADRD – we need federal movement, as well. After decades of research and rigorous scientific review, the first FDA-approved disease-modifying Alzheimer's therapies came to market in the past two years. Just last month, the FDA approved an additional therapy that helps

slow disease progression and delay cognitive decline for patients in the early stages of Alzheimer's.

Patients now have FDA-approved treatment options, they have the chance to live more independently, spend quality time with their loved ones and enjoy their lives with less challenges. Despite FDA's approval, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is limiting patient access to these therapies through its national coverage determination. This is an unfortunate example of federal agen-

cies butting heads and ultimately increasing barriers for patients.

It's critical that we advocate for collaborative partnerships at all levels of government and encourage CMS to reconsider this coverage decision now that innovative therapies have the stamp of approval from the FDA. We must support these thousands of patients and their loved ones and encourage continued research and development so that Alzheimer's patients and their families can receive the best care against this progressive disease.

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Shapiro Administration Announces First-in-PA Registered Apprenticeship Program to Plug Abandoned Oil and Gas Wells

The Shapiro Administration and the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) today announced a new registered apprenticeship program to train workers to plug oil and gas wells, helping to protect the environment and public health while providing workers with in-demand skills and family-sustaining wages. The new program will be run out of the United Mine Workers of America Career Centers, Inc.'s (UMWACC) Ruff Creek Training Center in Greene County where Governor Josh Shapiro visited earlier this month to highlight bipartisan investments in workforce development.

UMWACC's Gas Well Capping Technician program – the first-ever registered apprenticeship program for UMWA – provides workers with the knowledge to plug abandoned and orphaned wells that have the potential to cause health, safety, or environmental concerns and to mitigate harmful emissions and provide an economic boost to rural Appalachian communities transitioning away from fossil fuel economies.

"We have a huge abandoned well problem in Pennsylvania, and we need qualified and well-trained people to plug them. There are more than 350,000 orphaned and abandoned wells across our Commonwealth – and they make up nearly 8% of our total methane emissions," said Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley. "Sooner or later, every orphaned well is going to be a threat to the environment and public health, and we need people with the skills and training to plug the wells and restore the surrounding landscape. In addition to removing the threat that old wells pose, some active wells could find new life as geothermal wells, capturing buried heat for clean energy."

The Gas Well Capping Technician program is officially registered with the Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO), housed within the Department of Labor & Industry (L&I), and will train workers on the following topics: safety, well capping techniques, cement properties and skills, and land remediation.

"The Shapiro Administration is committed to addressing the needs of in-demand industries and preparing workers with the skills needed to be successful in our workforce," said L&I Secretary Nancy A. Walker. "The Registered Apprenticeship Occupation of Well Capping Technicians program offers a solution to both of those goals, by providing real career opportunities for individuals dedicated to the environmental and public health of our Commonwealth."

"This is a positive step toward addressing unemployment in Appalachia's coal mining communities," said UMWA International President Cecil E. Roberts. "The program will not only help stop leaking gas and oil wells but also provide workers with family-sustaining wages. Capping abandoned and orphaned wells is expected to take decades."

"We are very excited about this program," said Clemmy Allen, Executive Director of the UMWA Career Centers, Inc., a nonprofit 501c3 company. "The Well Capping Technician is one of the in-demand occupations in which dislocated coal mi-

ners and their families, as well as all those residing in rural mining communities of Appalachia, can train for without relocating. The partnership with the UMWA International union ensures workers will be paid family sustaining wages with benefits in good union jobs. We are proud to sponsor this program."

Pennsylvania has a long history of energy development, including the first commercial oil well in 1859. In 2022 the U.S. Department of the Interior awarded Pennsylvania an initial grant of \$25 million to plug orphaned and abandoned gas wells. DEP has plugged more than 250 wells since Governor Josh Shapiro took office, more than have been plugged over the last nine years combined. More information about the orphan and abandoned well plugging program is on the DEP website: [Rewriting Pennsylvania's Legacy \(pa.gov\)](https://www.dep.state.pa.us/legacy).

Since day one, the Shapiro Administration has been focused on crea-

ting real opportunities for hardworking people to obtain good-paying jobs, with an emphasis on valuing skills-based hiring — where every career path is treated with the same level of respect, regardless of whether or not it requires a college degree.

L&I has supported the creation of 53 registered apprenticeship programs in Pennsylvania since Governor Shapiro took office, with 15,665 registered apprentices currently active. L&I's Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) currently supports 884 unduplicated registered apprenticeship program sponsors and 1,561 occupation-specific programs across the Commonwealth. Additionally, there are 121 registered pre-apprenticeship programs and 1,213 pre-apprentices currently active.

Beyond approving new and unique registered apprenticeship programs, the Administration has been hard at work securing millions of dollars for workforce development in the

2024-25 bipartisan budget, including a \$30 million increase for vo-tech and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming and equipment and a first-time \$2 million investment for nursing apprenticeships. These investments in career and technical training and vo-tech education, registered apprenticeship programs, and on-the-job training build on the critical investments made last year. Taken together, Governor Shapiro and a bipartisan group of legislators have increased funding for workforce development by \$61 million since the Governor has been in office — a more than 50 percent increase.

For more information, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's website, or follow DEP on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, please visit the website or follow L&I on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.



On Saturday, August 17th, Bangor High School's Class of 1969, held their 55th class reunion in Stockertown, PA. Good times were had by all.

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Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary!



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Hello fellow readers, My writer friend, Koleen Garland who lives in Canada, sent a saga about her dagnabbit rabbit dilemma sure to delight.

I like to garden with a peaceful mind, happily digging my way to abundance and bounty. From one garden patch to another I wend my way through paths and gates humming my way along. But my idyllic outlook quickly loses it's cool with the sight of one of those nose twitching, ear flopping, foot thumping dagnabbit rabbits whose hairy little incidences have complete control over the harmonious relationship I have with my garden – and myself.

I'm a great fan of raised kitchen gardens. Weeding and planting are a snap. While raised beds are no hindrance for bugs and grubs but I thought for



rabbits, maybe? My hubby created four wonderful six foot square eighteen-inch-high enclosures and filled them with loamy earth. Not high enough for our huge Jack rabbits, but maybe discouraging enough for those smaller pesky little cottontails?

I gardened halfway through the first season constantly praising myself for being so cunning; no rabbit munches on the lettuce, a perfect green bean row and carrot tops. What a triumph! And what wonderful produce, all so easy to reach. Snip, snip, into the trug, ready for lunch, Ahhhh, — AHHHH!!

There it was right in front of me under a large kale leaf right— yup, a perfectly made rabbit nest, and in it five of the most beautiful little baby bunnies ever. Long eyelashes covered

sleeping eyes, and soft silken ears tucked neatly beside them. Dagnabbit Rabbits!

Well sorry mother rabbit but your lease just expired! I moved the nest to a tree a good way off. I'm embarrassed to say that sheepishly I checked two days later and found them still there. Guilty complex contained, haughtiness humbled, and garden intact. The fall harvest came and went, and I tucked up the garden for the long winter ahead.

It was a tough winter. When Canadians say a 'tough winter' it means that there are several times when you can't see ten feet out your windows for blowing snow, and it lasts on and off for a couple of weeks. One winter storm abated enough to see how our favorite roses were surviving the bluster. And

when we looked closely, we realized that the roses had paths around them— yup, rabbit tracks.

My heart fell. The roses would probably survive, but they would be rakish. The rabbits would take the best of the growth. The buds would be gone. Those Dagnabbit Rabbits!

Spring was a long time coming. I braced myself for the disaster I knew I would see. What I found was that the snow had been so high that only the longest branches of the roses were nibbled off. It was as if some boss rabbit had orchestrated a pruning job for me. There were rabbit droppings all over the place, a solid brown mat. Then rain washed it into the earth, and my roses and perennials leaped ahead. Never had the John Davis rose bloomed so profusely, gracing the living room

window with such beauty from inside. The allium was taller, the poker plant redder and the sedum shot upward. Everything was in complete harmony as if I had spent days and days working. And nary a rabbit was now to be seen.

I cannot say that I now welcome those dagnabbit rabbits into my garden. But I have become a little more tolerant and a little less anxious. But I must admit, I am taking precautions. I haven't got a dog, but I do have a small role of chicken wire fencing because I'm betting that if I have it, I won't need it.

Thank you, Koleen, for a sharing your story. May we all become little more tolerant and a little less anxious with whom we share the world with. Garden Dilemmas? Ask-MaryStone.com and your favorite podcast app.

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