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December 25, 2024

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Vol. 52, No. 23



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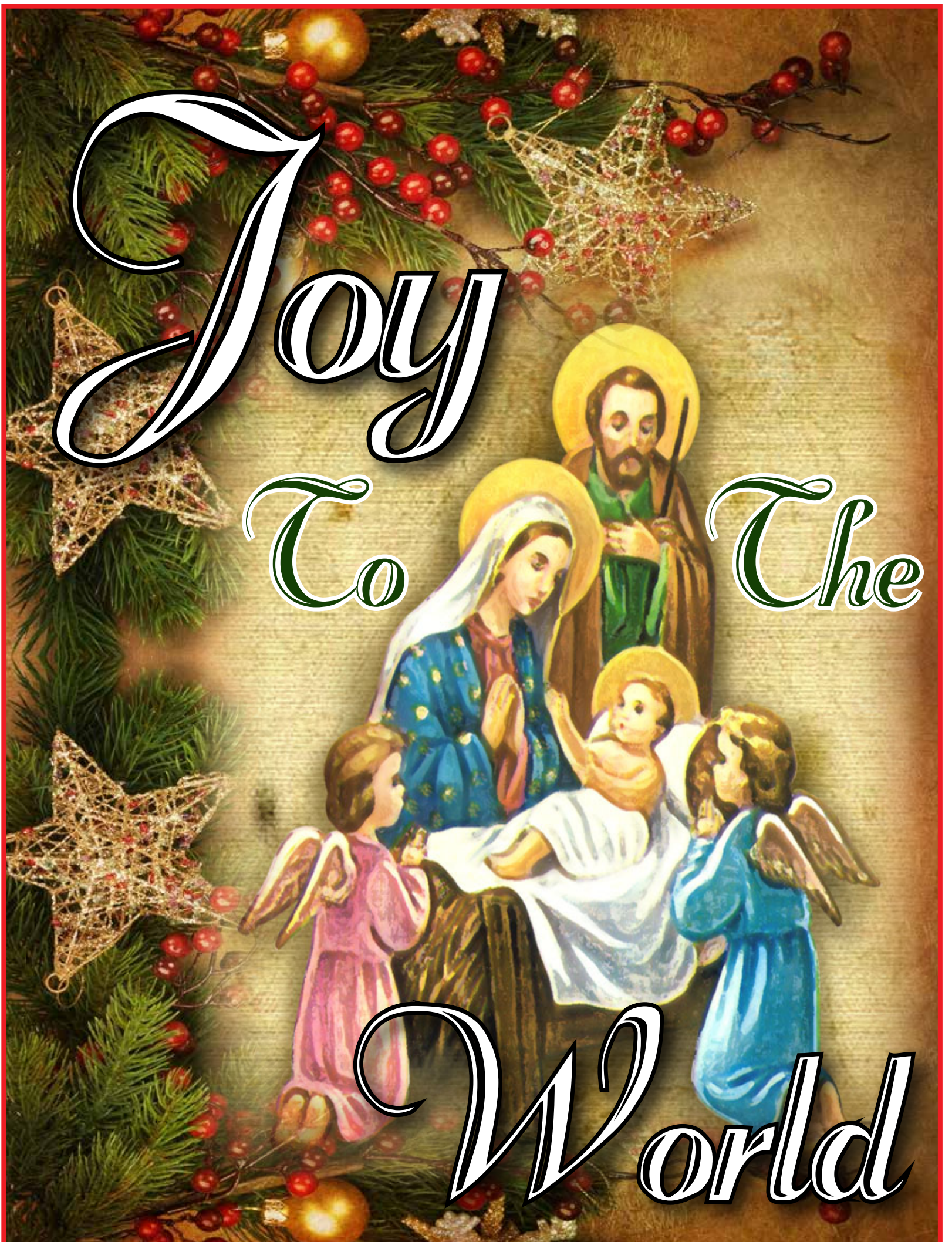
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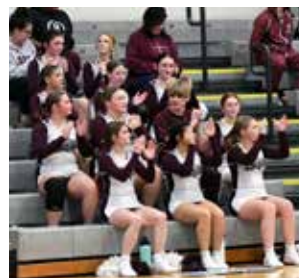
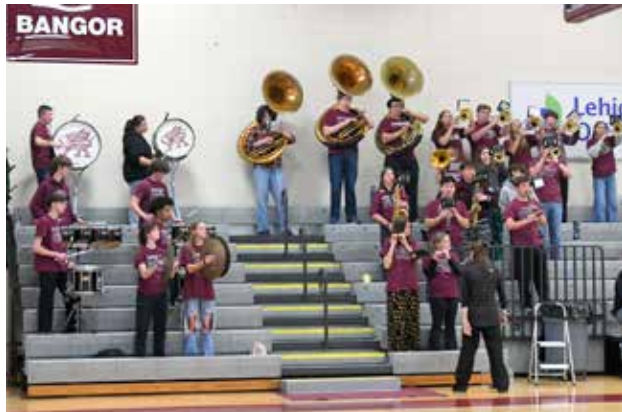
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Photos by Dale Young/
The Free Weekly Press

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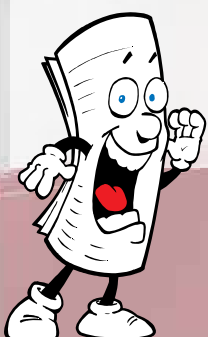
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PEN ARGYL (52) VS JIM THORPE (19) WRESTLING YOUTH NIGHT



Photos by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press



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Local Med Student's Career Takes Flight

Daniel Elmi's decision to become a medical student was informed by his diverse experiences, including as a precocious pilot.

Now in his first year at the Temple St. Luke's School of Medicine, Elmi started as an EMT the summer before his sophomore year at Lafayette College and then joined the school's EMS Club.

"I was able to get involved in direct patient care at a younger age, which led me to take pre-med courses in college," recalls Elmi, whose mother Aram Yousefi-Elmi, MD, is a St. Luke's pediatrician.

An economics major, the 2022 graduate mixed pre-med courses into his schedule and did a



capstone project on the disparities in healthcare faced by people who are not proficient in English. Elmi gained valuable in-

sight into the U.S. health-care system, which led to him becoming a medical scribe following graduation.

"In that position, I had the opportunity to work with great physicians in different specialties who are making a tremendous impact on their patients. Working with them motivated me to continue to medical school," he explains.

Elmi, who lives in Nazareth, is very close with his family and has strong ties to his local community. He volunteers at a nursing home and with a local emergency shelter.

"It's very important in my family to be close to and support one another. When I was applying to medical school, it was great to have an outstanding option here in the Lehigh Valley," says Elmi.

In addition to volunteering, Elmi is an avid sports fan, particularly of European soccer team Real Madrid. He also

worked hard for one of his childhood passions to take flight: Late in his high school career, he earned his private pilot's license to fly small, single-engine planes.

"I considered a career in aviation, but I knew that if I went into medicine, I could continue flying on the side," says Elmi, whose favorite trip is to New York City, flying low along the Hudson River and circling above the Statue of Liberty.

Obtaining his license required endless hours of studying and in the cockpit. Pilots, Elmi explains, have to be knowledgeable, prepared and detail-oriented because planes are complicated machines. As such, he is able to make a connection between flying and practicing medicine.

"There's so much attention that goes into prevention and risk mitigation.

Before you fly, you have to do a thorough pre-flight check to make sure all the systems are functioning properly. There's a lot of that in medicine as well. Before starting an operation, the medical team goes through a checklist to make sure they have the right equipment, patient, medication and personnel."

Elmi is excited to experience the range of specialties available through Temple St. Luke's School of Medicine, and he is eager to begin practicing and provide quality care.

"Practicing medicine is rewarding because you have the opportunity to make a positive impact on people's lives in some of their worst times," Elmi says.

"This is something I've seen firsthand and that I greatly appreciate about this career."

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3rd Annual Nicholas Paone Memorial Motorcycle Ride



It said 'In loving Memory of Nicholas P. Paone' 6/11/94 - 8/13/22 on their shirts on September 9th of this year at Upper

Mt. Bethel Park. A group of riders organized by the brother of Nicholas, Frank Paone held their 3rd annu-

al Ride/Benefit to raise money for charity in the name of Nicholas. Nicholas P. Paone, 28, of Bangor, PA passed

away Saturday, August 13th 2022, due to a motorcycle accident. He was a 2012 graduate of Bangor High School and was employed as a foreman at Belvidere Sand and Gravel in Belvidere, NJ.

"We wanted to do something to remember Nicholas by and what better than a motorcycle ride which he loved" said Paone. "The money we raised at the event \$3883 will go to the Slate Belt Veterans Assoc. to help build a 32 unit housing complex for disabled veterans" said Paone.

Toni Lynch treasure of SBVA accepted the check from Paone and thanked the Paone and group for the donation. The event was well attended with about 35 bikes that took the ride around the back roads of the Slate Belt then ended at Riverton Ball Field in Bangor for the 'pig roast', Music, bounce house for kids

and 50/50 raffle.

Family and friends greeted the riders as they road into the park. "We set up rides for the children and activites" said Paone, "we wanted it to be a family event to remember Nicholas."

Other donors to the event were: Hriczak Electrical, The Bagelsmith, Naeville Materials J. V., H&K, Custom Decorative Concrete, Werner & Sons Well Drilling, Kneebone & Sons Farm, G. Miller and Sons Welding.

"I want to thank everyone that helps out and the local businesses that donate to make this possible. It was really a great day with great food and weather. Hope to see everyone back next year" Said Frank Paone.

The Slate Belt Veterans Association (SBVA) is a 503c3 not-for-profit foundation based out of Bangor, PA. The SBVA all volunteer Board is mostly made up of veterans, including those

with service-connected disabilities. The current members of the Board are Leon Vanderpool, President; Tegwyn Hughes, Vice President; Toni E. Lynch, Treasurer; Terry DeGroot, Civil Engineer; Brad Kennedy, Financial Adviser, and Cindy Beck, Secretary, Michael Ortoski Advisory Board Member.

The primary purpose of the SBVA is to honor those who have served and to support and assist those who have returned home, especially those who returned with service-connected disabilities. SBVA has purchased the property situated at 428 Market Street (4th and Market) in Bangor, Pennsylvania for the future project. The project is in large part possible due to the generosity of Brian Perin. Brian passed away in 2017, and his generous gift is the cornerstone to move the project forward. Brian was co-owner of Grand Central Sanitation.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

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Tips For Homeowners: Light Safety During the Holidays

(NAPSI)—While for many businesses, homeowners, and renters, decorating with lights is a festive holiday tradition, it's important to keep safety in mind. Here are a few simple tips from National Grid on how to celebrate in a safe and energy-efficient way:

Limit light use: Running lights for hours on end can be both dangerous and costly. Wait until dark to turn on holiday lights and be sure to unplug them before going to bed or leaving the house. A good rule of thumb is to keep lights plugged in for no more than six hours each day. Aim for energy efficiency: Upgrading to LED bulbs from traditional incandescent mini bulbs can be both cost effective and energy effi-



cient. LED bulbs use up to 90 percent less energy and can last 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs. Additionally, using a light timer and an advanced power strip to

cut power to decorations when they are turned off can minimize energy usage.

Keep lights updated: When purchasing lights, look for the Underwrit-

ers Laboratories label to indicate that they have been tested and met industry safety standards. Before decorating, take a minute to look for any frayed wires, damaged sockets, cracked insulation, and burned out or missing bulbs to avoid electric shock. Also, read all labels to make sure light sets are correctly deployed and determine whether they are designed for indoor or outdoor use.

Practice tree smarts: According to the National Fire Protection Association, 45 percent of Christmas tree fires are related to faulty or misused lighting and electricity. Play it safe by keeping natural trees consistently watered. Additionally, keep all extension cords and light strings away from the tree stand and water bowl. When buying an artificial tree, look for one with an Underwriters Laboratories label to ensure it has been tested for fire and electrical safety. Don't overload branches with too many decorations or hang ornaments on lighting

wires. Finally, avoid electric-powered decorations when decorating a tree with metallic needles or branches.

Be on guard outdoors: Always be aware of your surroundings when decorating outside, as contact with power lines can lead to serious or fatal injuries. Decorations cannot be hung on or even near live electrical supply lines. Keep decorations at least 10 feet away from power lines and maintain that same distance when using an aluminum ladder. All lights, cords, plugs, and sockets should be rated for outdoor or all-weather conditions, and protect cords by keeping them off the ground or using waterproof cord covers. All exterior lighting should be plugged into ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI), which automatically cut power when faults occur to prevent electric shock. Don't get overload-

ed: A common danger with decorating for the holidays is overloading your electrical circuits, which can trip breakers and fuses. To avoid this, check the fuse or breaker panel to determine circuit capacity and never double-up extension cords or power strips. Older homes generally have circuits that carry a maximum of 1800 watts each, while newer homes' circuits can carry a maximum of 2400 watts.

The holidays should be a time of joy and peace. Lights can help make things festive and bright. Keeping these safety tips in mind can help you enjoy a stress-free holiday. As always, National Grid will continue working every day to build and maintain a smarter, stronger, cleaner electric system that reliably and affordably powers your celebrations year-round.

For further facts and tips, visit www.national-gridus.com.

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NJDEP Seeks Nominations For Inaugural Natural Resource Restoration Advisory Council - MUST BE SUBMITTED BY DEC. 31

As authorized by Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette's Administrative Order No. 2023-08, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is seeking nominations of qualified candidates for consideration as members of the department's inaugural Natural Resource Restoration Advisory Council. Nominations are due by December 31, 2024. Interested applicants may self-nominate or be nominated by another individual or organization.

The Advisory Council will provide insight and feedback concerning the DEP's identification, planning, and implementation of restoration projects in response to natural resource damage settlements. The Advisory Council will also assist the department in communicating restoration project objectives and outcomes to the public.

For details on how to submit a nomination and additional information on qualification requirements visit: <https://dep.nj.gov/nrr/nomination-solicitation-natural-resource-restoration-advisory-council>

Advisory Council Composition - The Natural Resource Restoration Advisory Council will be composed of nine members: Two permanent members from the DEP - the Assistant Commissioner for Community Invest-

ment and Economic Revitalization (CIER), who will serve as the Chair; and a representative from the DEP's Office of Natural Resource Restoration (ONRR), appointed by the Chair.

Additionally, one member will be appointed by the Commissioner for a two-year term from each of the following sectors:

A statewide organization dedicated to conservation, restoration, or preservation of natural resources.

A statewide environmental justice organization.

A regulated entity involved in remediation or restoration or a representative of such entities.

An academic or research organization focused on natural resources.

A local government unit concerned with environmental issues or stewardship of public lands, or a representative organization.

In addition, two public members will be appointed by the Commissioner for two-year terms.

Advisory Council Responsibilities: The Advisory Council is scheduled to convene in February 2025, with meetings lasting two hours each. The initial series of meetings will take place monthly from February through July. Following this inaugural schedule, the council will meet quarterly. Indi-

viduals appointed to the Advisory Council will serve a 24-month term.

During their tenure, council members will focus on the following:

Developing recommendations for a public mechanism to identify and catalog potential restoration project opportunities.

Supporting public engagement and communication efforts related to these projects.

Recommending principles and priorities for the identification, planning, and implementation of restoration projects.

Preparing an outline for an annual report that will identify potential restoration project opportunities.

Administrative Order 2023-08 and DEP's NRD Responsibilities

Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 9 of the New Jersey Constitution, effective December 7, 2017, mandates that revenue from settlements and awards related to natural resource damages, collected due to environmental contamination, be credited annually to a special account in the General Fund. These funds are specifically dedicated to repairing, restoring, or replacing damaged natural resources, as well as covering legal expenses and costs associated with pursuing such claims.

The use of these funds is prioritized to first address damages in the area



where they occurred. If no local project is available, the funds are then directed within the same water region, and finally, statewide if necessary. Additionally, up to 10% of the funds can be allocated for administrative costs.

In alignment with this constitutional mandate, Administrative Order No. 2023-08, issued by Commissioner LaTourette on March 14, 2023, outlines the state's natural resource restoration policy and the DEP's responsibilities in protecting and restoring natural resources in New Jersey.

A key component of this order is the establishment of the Natural Resource Restoration Advisory Council, designed to engage with the public regarding the DEP's restoration projects. While the Advisory Council's work and recommendations are strictly advisory, the selection and implementation of restoration projects remain at the sole discretion of the Commissioner. The Advisory Council does not participate in

collaborative processes with responsible parties but may advise on project implementation after settlements are reached. For more information on DEP's natural resource

restoration work, visit <https://dep.nj.gov/nrr/>.

For further information, contact Community Investment and Economic Revitalization at Onrr@dep.nj.gov.

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Brown Pushes for State Authority to Combat Drone Threats in PA

In response to increasing reports of unexplained drone activity in Pennsylvania and neighboring New Jersey, last week, I introduced a resolution urging the federal government to grant state governments the authority to respond to these possible threats. Click here to watch my video.

Since mid-November, New Jersey has documented more than 3,000 sightings of unidentified drones, some as large as cars, operating near military bases, private residences, and other sensitive locations. These incidents are now being reported in Pennsylvania, heightening concerns about public safety and national security.

I have also taken direct action by sending a letter to Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Michael Whitaker, calling on the FAA to pri-



oritize addressing the issue and provide states with the authority to act when drones pose a threat.

Current federal regulations tie the hands of state and local governments, preventing them from taking immediate action when drones threaten the safety and privacy of our communities. This resolution is

a necessary step to empower states to respond swiftly and decisively to these threats. This is about giving states the tools they need to protect their residents.

Our communities cannot afford delays caused by federal bureaucracy when faced with potential threats. States must be permitted to respond in real time.

New Military License Plates to Honor PA Veterans



Pennsylvania now offers six new license plates to honor military veterans. Three of the plates recognize service members who received medals or honors for individual achievements or deployments. They include the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal Registration Plate, the Operation Inherent Resolve Veterans Plate and the Borinqueneers Congressional Gold Medal Registration Plate. For \$26, the plates – which bear a graphic of the medal awarded – can be used on cars or trucks. The other three new plate designs recognize female veterans. Two are available for motorcycles and the third is for cars and trucks. They include the Women Veteran Motorcycle Registration Plate and the Women Veteran Registration Plate both for \$26 and the Honoring Our Women Veteran Motorcycle Registration Plate for \$41. More information can be found at: www.pa.gov/agencies/dmv/vehicle-services/registration-plates.html#sortCriteria=%40copapwptitle%20ascending

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A Dog Trainer’s Tips for a Safe, Fun Holiday Season with Pets

(NAPSI)—The holidays are a great time to bond with loved ones, which—for most people—includes beloved pets. Whether you’re dressing up in matching outfits and snuggling up at home, enjoying traditions and festivities with family and friends, or traveling for holiday adventures together, these essential tips will help you and your pets navigate a safe, healthy and fun holiday season and beyond:



- **Prepare Pets for Big Gatherings:** Pets thrive on routine, so new people, sights, smells and sounds can cause extra stress during the holiday season. Give your pet a calm, quiet place of their own, such as a crate or bed in a room away from the festivities. Training can also help your pet self-soothe when they are feeling stressed or overstimulated. Introduce your pet to new pets and people in a calmer environment before the holiday festivities begin. If this isn’t possible, you can still practice meeting new people by inviting a friend over to mimic these interactions and using positive reinforce-

ment to reward desired behaviors. A professional dog trainer can also provide personalized tips to keep your pet comfortable and polite in new situations and festive environments.

- **Heed Holiday Hazards:** The holidays bring festive decorations, new foods and colder weather, all of which can pose risks to pets. Common holiday plants such as poinsettias, ivy, holly and mistletoe can be toxic if ingested, so these should be kept out of pets’ reach. Similarly, avoid giving your pet potentially toxic holiday foods such as ham,

turkey skin and bones, onions, garlic, candy and chocolate. Holiday decorations are meant to be enjoyed by all, but if you have a frisky feline that likes to knock things over, move breakable decorations out of reach and place glass ornaments higher up on the tree. And, for pet parents living in or traveling to cold climates, be sure your pet is bundled up with gear including a cozy puffer jacket, festive holiday sweater and booties.

- **Travel Safely:** Travel via planes, trains and cars reaches a peak during the holidays. If

your pet will join you, plan ahead to confirm pet-friendly hotels, TSA-approved carriers and a special seatbelt or harness for the car. Use a pet travel bag for all the essentials—plenty of your pet’s food, travel bowls for food and water, calming supplements, their favorite toys, and a bed or blanket they can use while away from home. For anxious pets, slowly work your way up from exposure to the car, to sitting in it while the engine’s off, to longer rides, while rewarding calm behavior along the way. Be sure to consult your veterinarian to

rule out any underlying health issues contributing to anxiety and for your pet’s specific needs.

- **Start the New Year on the Right Paw:** This year, many people are starting their New Year’s resolutions early, and pets should, too. Getting new routines in place now can help lay the groundwork for a healthy and strong start to the new year. Schedule your pet’s regular veterinary and grooming appointments and ask about any nutrition or exercise changes if your pet is entering a new life stage. It’s always a good time to set goals for a new training regimen, regardless of your pet’s age.

- **Celebrate in Style:** No holiday celebration would be complete without gifts and treats. Pets can get in on the fun by snuggling up in holiday pajamas that match their parent’s, getting cozy in themed beds such as a snow globe and a dreidel, donning a dapper tree print collar and sporting a festive sweater. Pets can join in baking traditions with a matching oven mitt and dog toy set and an adorable pie-shaped plush dog toy. The dog toy Advent calendar, holiday beverage plush toys and

jar of plush pickle toys make great gifts for dogs, while a teaser base with assorted festive attachments, a cat treat Advent calendar and a six-foot cat scratch house are sure to be a hit with cats. For Hanukkah, Petco has a cute “Chewish” plush bone dog toy, dreidel cat teaser, blue fair isle cozy coat, and more.

- **Save on New Pet Essentials:** Petco’s new “Welcome to the Family” program features free in-store booklets providing new dog and cat parents with practical guidance and shopping checklists for pet parents created by Petco’s expert veterinary, training and grooming teams, plus exclusive discounts on pet services and essentials from top brands.

For more tips, guides and gifting inspiration to help you and your pet celebrate the holidays and have a happy and healthy new year, visit a Petco pet care center or petco.com.

- **Darris Cooper** is the National Dog Training Manager at Petco. He has worked in the industries of animal training and behavior, pet lifestyle and broadcast journalism, and has been a professional dog trainer for 15 years.

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Pennsylvania Older Adults Create Hundreds of Handmade Ornaments for the State Capitol Christmas Tree

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA) announced that visitors to the State Capitol Main Rotunda during the holiday season can check out hundreds of handmade ornaments hung on the Christmas tree that were created by older adults from across the Commonwealth. Older adults from 135 Senior Community Centers in 46 counties submitted ornaments in response to an annual invitation from the Department. The Christmas tree will remain in the State Capitol Main Rotunda until January 8, 2025.

“The Department of Aging is pleased to once again see the tremendous response of ornaments submitted by the Senior Community Centers. These ornaments and the tree will help spread good cheer and unity to the hundreds of thousands of visitors to our State Capitol during this holiday season,” said Secretary of Aging Jason Kavulich. “We are proud to join the Area Agencies on Aging and the Senior Community Centers that submitted the ornaments to display the creativity of the older adults who hand made them. I thank all the older adults who contributed ornaments as part of this annual holiday tradition.”

Senior Community Centers that submitted holiday ornaments include:

Adams County Area Agency on Aging on

behalf of the six Senior Community Centers

Allegheny County – Beechview Healthy Active Living Center, Brighton Heights Healthy Active Living Center, Caring Heights Community Care and Rehab, CYA - Stephen Foster Community Center, Morning-side Healthy Active Living Community Center, Mount Washington Healthy Active Living Community Center, Sheraden Healthy Active Living Center, South Side Market House Senior Center, Vintage Senior Services

Bedford County – Bedford Area Senior Center

Beaver County – Center at the Mall, Circle of Friends Conway, Circle of Friends New Brighton

Berks County – Berks Encore Strausstown

Blair County – Altoona Senior Center, Northern Blair Senior Center, Williamsburg Senior Center

Bucks County – Bensalem Senior Center, Central Bucks Senior Center, Middletown Senior Citizens Association

Butler County Area Agency on Aging on behalf of the seven Senior Community Centers

Cameron County – Driftwood Senior Center

Carbon County – Jim Thorpe/Penn-Kidder Senior Center, Lehighon Senior Center, Weatherly Senior Center

Centre County – Penns Valley Senior Resource Center

Chester County – Brandywine Valley Active Aging, Surrey Services Devon

Clearfield County – Clearfield Center for Active Living, Coalport Center for Active Living, Mahaffey Center for Active Living

Columbia County – Bloomsburg Senior Center

Dauphin County – Friendship Senior Center, Leader Center for Active Life

Delaware County – Good Neighbor Senior Center, Wayne Senior Center

Elk County – Bennetts Valley Senior Center, St. Marys Senior Center

Erie County – Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC)

Franklin County Area Agency on Aging on behalf of the eight Senior Community Centers

Fulton County – Hustontown Senior Center

Greene County – Waynesburg Center

Jefferson County – The Foundry, The Heritage House, Punxsutawney Senior Center

Lackawanna County – Fallbrook Senior Community Center, Hillside Senior Community Center, Mid Valley Senior Community Center, Scranton Senior Community Center, Taylor Senior Community Center, Throop Senior Community Center

Lancaster County – Co-

lumbia Senior Center, Lancaster Neighborhood Senior Center, Millersville Senior Center, Next Gen Senior Community Center

Lawrence County – Challenges: New Castle

Lebanon County – Myerstown Senior Center

Lehigh County Area Agency on Aging on behalf of the 12 Senior Community Centers

Luzerne County – Dallas Active Adult Center, Hazleton Active Adult Center, Kingston Active Adult Center, Linda Kohut Pittston Active Adult Center

McKean County – Sme-

thport Senior Center

Mercer County – Greenville Senior Community Center

Monroe County – Loder Senior Center

Montgomery County – ACLAMO Senior Community Center, The Center at the Open Link, Encore Experiences in Harleysville, Jaisohn Wellness Center, Montco SAAC Norristown, Montco SAAC Ambler, The Peak Center in Lansdale, Salem Adult Citizens Center, Surrey Services Bryn Mawr

Northampton County – Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley, Northampton Senior Community Center

Northumberland County – Herndon Adult Community Center

Perry County – Central Perry Community Senior Center, Duncannon Senior Center



Philadelphia County – KleinLife, Norris Square Adult Community Center, The Senior Center at Lutheran Settlement House, Star Harbor Senior Citizen Center

Potter County – Oswayo Valley Senior Center, Ulysses Senior Center

Schuylkill County – Diakon Community Services on behalf of county seniors

Snyder County – Penns Creek Adult Resource Center, Selingsgrove Senior Center

Somerset County Area Agency on Aging

Sullivan County – Mildred Active Living Center

Washington County – Bentleyville Senior Center, Beth Center Senior Citizens Center, Cross Creek Senior Center, McDonald Cecil Senior Center, McGuffey Area

Senior Citizens Wayne County – Hamlin Senior Community Center

Westmoreland County – Alle-Kiski Center for Active Adults, Avonmore Center for Active Adults, Mount Pleasant Center for Active Adults, New Florence Center for Active Adults, New Alexandria Center for Active Adults, Valley Center for Active Adults

Wyoming County – Falls Active Adult Center, Wyoming County Active Adult Center,

York County – Windy Hill on the Campus

Older adults who are looking for a Senior Community Center in their community can either contact their local Area Agency on Aging or visit the Department of Aging's website.

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Hello, fellow readers,
The surprise snow was lovely to wake up to, inspiring decorating outdoors. While doing so, I thought about Christmas memories and made new memories in the galivant.
Miss Ellie learned to flail her tail by the door where the ribbons of bells hang, creating a sound like a reindeer making a landing. The bells are next to where we stash the biscuits. Ellie's cleverness earned her a treat. The bells are hung in the same spot, but Jolee hasn't yet learned the ringing for a biscuit trick.
I remember when Ellie grabbed a tennis ball from the two sitting in front of the charming golden angel statue below the viburnum Sara used for respite during hot afternoons. Ellie's ball playing was sporadic and not nearly as

skilled as my ball-aholic, but it always brought a smile.

There's a photo above my desk of another snow with Ellie pulling the fuzz off a tennis ball with her paws packed in snow, making it look like she's wearing fuzzy slippers. When I reflect on that moment and look at the photo now, it feels like two moments in time coming together – as if Sara were passing the ball to Ellie. And now Jolee plays tennis from time to time, but, like Ellie, Jolee is not the stellar player Sara was. Chasing squirrels and chipmunks is her thing.

We stopped for a posed shot in front of the weeping hemlock planted in memory of my brother Bill, who passed just before Christmas eleven years ago; it's hard to imagine how fast time has gone by. There's solace in imagining that Bill and our momma, called home after Bill, are now together with dear old Dad. But I miss Christmas caroling behind the piano while visiting them in Florida as we used to do.

I decorate the hemlock each year with a big red Christmas ball and adore the portrait of Ellie in front of the tree. I tried encouraging Jolee to pose for the same shot, but she's always on the move. An action shot



will do fine.
I love how the weeping hemlock's form compliments the wispy Japanese forest grass in the rock garden. It's my favorite ornamental grass, especially dry in its golden glory. Japanese forest grass doesn't flatten with the weight of snow nor require cutting back. The new growth will push out the old in Spring. You can take a soft rake to help the shedding along, but bringing in the new comes easily—a lesson we can bring to our garden of life.

I hung a gifted wreath on the front door from dear friends and moved the undecorated stand-in above the covered footbridge over the pond, adding stems of berried holly to gussy it up. The red bow I had handy was too tattered, per Curt. It served many years decorating the wooden sled left behind by the previous owners. I snuck it on the wreath anyway. The history of

decking the halls earned its weathered look. Signs of age, just as with people, are beautiful. A sign of life well-lived.

Previously, I shared a story about Ellie's memorial holly that dropped all its leaves the first Spring. I rallied to fertilize and keep the soil moist, and it came back to life, though lopsided. There's beauty in imperfection.

While decorating the tree with Jolee, I marveled at how the tree is filling out—there's wisdom in not giving up hope and providing nourishment and love instead. But sometimes, it's time to say goodbye.

All living things return to their source. There is life and no life, and then new beginnings sprout, fed by the nourishment from the generati-



ons before. And there is love that never ends or dies. Wiggly Jolee sat still before the resurrected holly for me to take her portrait. Perhaps Ellie encouraged her to do so from above.

Holidays bring reflections that trigger a

longing for years gone by. I hope you find comfort in going home for Christmas in your most beautiful memories and dreams. Merry Christmas. Garden Dilemmas? AskMaryStone.com and your favorite Podcast App.



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