

# LOCAL & STATE

## Christian Social Services To Hold Christmas Event Dec. 6

**SPECIAL TO THE NEWS**

Fulton County Christian Social Services Inc. will hold holiday activities on Saturday, December 6, all day from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Activities included will be:

Gingerbread house decorating contest at the Fulton Theatre. Entry dropoff is from 9:00 a.m. to noon, with judging beginning at noon. Winners will be announced at 2:00 p.m.

A silent auction of all entries will end at 4:00 p.m. First place will be awarded \$50, with second and third place receiving \$25 and \$15. Registrations may be picked up at area businesses or by calling 240-313-0984. Registrations must be received by December 4.

Santa will visit from 10:00 a.m. to noon and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the theatre.

The Food Basket will also have its holiday food drive. Donate to local families by dropping off food at the theatre.

The Catholic Mission will be collecting hats, gloves and scarves or stocking stuffers such as crayons, coloring books, storybooks, etc., along with the Salvation Army kettle drive.

Great Cove Golf Course restaurant will have food available all day at the theatre and a bake sale with Christmas cookies will also be held.

At 4:30 p.m., a Christmas concert will be held with the Angel Bell Ringers of Mercersburg. The choir is made up of individuals with Down syndrome. Don't miss this concert. What a beautiful blessing they are. A freewill offering will be taken up for their ministry.

All are invited to stop and enjoy these activities all day long and support the community.

## Christmas In The Village Sunday, Dec. 7

**SPECIAL TO THE NEWS**

Santa Claus will come to the town of Fort Loudon on a horse-drawn wagon at 6:00 p.m., Sunday, December 7, to light the town Christmas tree and usher in the holiday season during the fifth annual Christmas in the Village at the Fort Loudon Community Center. After the tree lighting, Santa will listen to Christmas wishes and hand out treats. Free horse wagon rides will also be available. Children will also be invited to make a craft. Sounds of the season will be provided by Joann Sloca on piano.

Cookies and other sweets will be offered along with coffee, punch and hot chocolate. All are welcome to attend.

The Fort Loudon Inn will be open for tours from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. At 5:00 p.m., Anna Rotz will speak about the history of the inn, including the underground railroad and Rose Vance.

Christmas in the Village is co-sponsored by the Fort Loudon Historical Society and the Fort Loudon Ruritan Club.

More information may be obtained by calling 717-369-3473.

## Rock Hill Farm Christmas Open House Dec. 6

**SPECIAL TO THE NEWS**

Conococheague Institute at Rock Hill Farm will celebrate "Memories of Christmas Past" at its annual Christmas open house on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2008, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Rock Hill Farm is located at 12955 Bain Road, Mercersburg.

"Our open house this year focuses on the Christmas customs of the early settlers of our area," said Conococheague Institute's executive director, Dr. Walter Powell. "The 1750s farmhouse will feature the traditions of 18th century England," Dr. Powell said. "The Negley Cabin dates back to the early 1800s and will highlight the German celebration along with an open hearth cooking demonstration."

The Welsh Barrens Visitors Center will include Christmas exhibits from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries. Refreshments, special music and many more old-fashioned Christmas activities are planned, Dr. Powell added.

Conococheague Institute was founded in 1994 to interpret life on the Pennsylvania frontier at the time of the French and Indian War. Please call 717-328-3467 for additional information.

# The Year Of Holiday Thrift

More consumers than last year say they'll look for bargains. Thrift shops are in

**By Ron Scherer**

STAFF WRITER OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR  
NEW YORK – The United States is becoming a nation of frugal bargain hunters.

This holiday period, Americans of all backgrounds are discovering what it takes to become a professional penny pincher and what makes a dollar stretch.

Some are forgoing the department store for Wal-Mart or Target. Gift givers are crowding into Goodwill or the local thrift store. Coupon clipping has practically become a new religion. And the latest stories to tell at parties start with: "Want to hear how I haggled with the merchant?"

Evidence of this declining interest in shopping came Wednesday, when the U.S. Commerce Department reported that personal spending in October fell by 0.5 percent after falling 3.7 percent in the third quarter.

The deal hunters are expected to be out even more the day after Thanksgiving, when retailers traditionally use promotions and sales to entice Americans to shop. One early survey shows that 45 percent of Americans, up nine percentage points from last year, plan to look for high-definition television sets at reduced rates or anything else that discounters plan to offer at a low, low price.

"Almost half the people polled are looking to save money," says Erin Hershkowitz, a spokeswoman for the International Council of Shopping Centers, which did the early survey of shoppers. "The one retail sector still showing positive results is the discounters."

It's no surprise that the main catalyst for the transfor-

mation is the economy. The decline in U.S. housing prices, for example, is making it increasingly difficult to use the house as a piggy bank. This lesson hit hard for Leah Ingram of New Hope, Pa.

In the good old days – only a few years ago – Ingram and her husband took advantage of the rising price of their house by refinancing and pulling out their equity in cash.

"We took out a bona fide home-equity line, too, and put a front porch on the old house," Ingram recalls. "We took a cruise and six months later did it again."

That was then. When they sold their old house, they got less than anticipated. When they bought a new house, their payments were higher – while they have the same income. Now, she scans the circulars for coupons every week, and she visits thrift shops for her clothes.

"We went from living \$500 a month in the red to \$800 in the black," says the freelance writer.

Her daughters have also embraced the concept, shopping at Plato's Closet, which sells designer-name children's clothes at a discount. "My 11-year-old loves Abercrombie clothes and saw a T-shirt for \$50," Ingram recounts. "She said, 'Who can spend that kind of money? I can go to Plato's and get one for \$15.'"

Ingram's spending regimen extends to the holidays. She will make her own holiday decorations. "Two years ago, I would have gone to the gardening center and bought pine boughs," she says. "Now, I can't do that anymore."

She isn't the only one economizing. Businesses that help people save report that business is booming. At Coupons.com, business is up 50 percent in the past three months. Consumer savings using Coupons.com have soared from \$26 million in Au-

gust to \$40 million in October.

"We've never seen the rate of use this high at this time of year," says Steven Boal, CEO of the company, which is based in Mountain View, Calif.

"People are branching out into lots of different categories and searching the site more frequently."

Thrift and resale stores also are expecting a merry holiday season, a continuation of a strong year. In a recent survey of its members, the National Association of Resale & Thrift Shops (NARTS) found that September and October sales increased an average of 35 percent over last year for 74 percent of those surveyed.

One shopper at Goodwill in New London, Conn., is Julie Wernau, who purchased a Roomba vacuum cleaner for \$15. "My husband needs to do some repairs on it," she says. "You can find good bargains at Goodwill, but you have to go often or someone else will snatch it up," advises the Quaker Hill, Conn., resident.

When they can, people are opting for something that's already been used and is free. Swaptree.com, a Boston-based company, connects people trading books, CDs, and video games for free. "Our growth just exploded in July," says Mark Hexamer, one of the founders. "We're saving our customers \$40,000 in what they would have to pay for books, textbooks, and other media every day."

Hexamer has used the service himself to cut costs on videos for his young daughter. "She started out wanting everything about Dora the Explorer," he says. Now, he's traded the Dora videos for Cinderella, her latest interest. "I figure we've probably saved close to \$1,000," he says.

A rising number of entrepreneurs are finding it profitable to show people how to cut expenses, including during the holidays. Clarky Davis, a

Raleigh, N.C., woman who bills herself as the Debt Diva, released a video on YouTube that demonstrates how to put together a "s'mores" gift basket – skewers included – for under \$10.

Davis, sort of an anti-Martha Stewart, got her start in the business after getting into credit-card trouble. It took her 2-1/2 years to pay off her debt, and then she became a credit counselor. From there, she's become a disciple of finding ways to economize. "I felt people needed something basic about how to get through the day and not spend any money," she said last Wednesday while on her way to a Philadelphia TV station to be interviewed by a consumer reporter.

Another entrepreneur, Samantha Chapnick, runs a Web site called kidcityny.com, which she says tries to help families find less-expensive ways to maintain their lifestyle. One recent recommendation for the holidays: Go to a Web site called RetailMeNot.com, which posts coupons for more than 20,000 stores. "Last weekend, the Gap, Williams-Sonoma, and other stores were giving 30 percent off if you printed a coupon," says Chapnick, who says her Web site hits are up 400 percent in the past three months.

Will the nation's newfound frugality lead to something else? A nation of cheapskates is a scenario that turns economists' knees to jelly.

"We had the same thing happen after the 1930s," recalls economist Dennis Jacobo of Gallup Inc. in Washington. "There was a change in psychology, where savings had a higher priority and spending a lower priority. It's not a bad idea for the individual and their balance sheet, but for the economy, it means a whole lot less spending and slower economic growth."

## Pa. Chopping Block Grows As Deficit Gets Bigger

**By Marc Levy**

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER  
HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) – Gov. Ed Rendell and legislative leaders are intensifying their search for budget cuts and spare millions as the deteriorating economy continues to unravel Pennsylvania's \$28.3 billion spending plan.

The state's bleak revenue collections look certain to make November the seventh straight month that expectations have not been met as Rendell's agency heads draw up a second round of spending cuts to try to avert a deficit.

Some of the biggest recipients of the state's funding – hospitals and nursing homes that serve the poor and uninsured, and counties that administer safety nets for addiction treatment, mental health needs and neglected children – are worried about those cuts.

"Worried is sort of an understatement," said Jim Redmond, a Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania lobbyist.

Public schools this year received a big new injection of money to help them educate students to meet Pennsylvania's academic standards, and now school boards are worried about the future of those programs.

County commissioners warned the state against cutting their funding and simply sending the costs down the ladder to county taxpayers.

"The state cutting its share may save state taxpayers money, but those same taxpayers are hit when we are forced to raise property taxes to make up the difference," said Dave Coder, a Greene County commissioner who is president of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

Through October, Pennsylvania state government revenue collections were running 7 percent behind – at that rate, the state would be facing a deficit of nearly \$2 billion when the fiscal year ends on June 30.

On Oct. 30, Rendell announced that he was freezing \$311 million in spending, and asked groups outside his control, including the Legislature and Judiciary, to take similar steps. Two weeks ago, he ordered his agency heads to undertake a second round of cuts, to be revealed Dec. 9 when Rendell briefs legislative leaders.

Decisions on where to cut, and whether to increase a tax, is likely to send partisan sparks flying.

Senate President Pro Tem-

pore Joe Scarnati and Democratic House Appropriations Chairman Dwight Evans are saying everything should be considered – although they diverge on the question of a tax increase.

Evans' spokeswoman said the Philadelphia Democrat is willing to consider a "targeted" tax increase, as opposed to a more general tax increase. Scarnati's spokesman said the Jefferson County Republican believes the budget can be balanced without an increase.

Regardless, there are plenty of suggestions from Capitol observers on what should be done.

"It is a cop out just to do a 5 percent across-the-board cut, because you're rewarding bad programs and punishing good programs," said Eric Epstein, coordinator of RocktheCapitol.org.

For starters, tens of millions of dollars in grants – known as "WAMs," for walking around money – are controlled by state legislative leaders. The grants may go toward worthy causes, such as community non-profits and school groups, but Epstein and others say recipients are selected in a secretive process that is not based on merit.

The state spends tens of millions more on what the libertarian Commonwealth Foundation

calls "corporate welfare" – grants, tax credits and reimbursements that reward businesses for picking Pennsylvania over another state as a destination to expand or relocate.

The state also has reserves to consider.

That includes a "rainy day fund" of nearly \$750 million for hard economic times. The Legislature keeps its own surplus, too, squirreled away since the 1990s in the name of shielding the institution during a budget dispute with a vengeful governor. The last annual audit of the surplus tallied it at more than \$240 million on June 30, 2007.

Then there's the tax code.

The liberal Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center pointed out that the state could capture more than \$600 million if it closes a loophole through which many businesses avoid paying Pennsylvania's corporate income tax.

In addition, Pennsylvania is one of the biggest natural gas-producing states that does not tax the activity – a free pass that could cost Pennsylvania more money in the future as exploration companies flock here to drill into the potentially lucrative Marcellus Shale gas formation.

## Trial Scheduled For Shives

Enters not-guilty plea last week

**By Chanin Rotz-Mountz**  
STAFF WRITER

A Big Cove Tannery man is set to reappear in the Fulton County Court of Common Pleas during the January 2009 trial term on allegations he attempted to shoot at his ex-girlfriend while passing her vehicle along Route 522.

Michael Frederick Shives Sr. appeared before Judge Carol L. Van Horn last Tuesday for mandatory arraignment on one count each criminal attempt-murder of the first degree; aggravated assault; possession of an instrument of crime; simple assault; recklessly endangering another person; and criminal mischief. Shives, who appeared along side defense attorney Chris Sheffield, entered a not-guilty plea to all charges, and his trial has been accordingly set for the January 26 term of court.

The victim of the attempted murder, a 47-year-old Warfordsburg area woman, initially informed state police she was heading to Sheetz on September 17 to begin her work shift when she observed Shives' vehicle immediately behind her on the Ayr Township roadway. The vehicle driven by Shives then pulled into the oncoming lane next to her northbound vehicle between Webster Mills and Union Church Road. As he passed her, Shives allegedly fired two shots from a pistol into her driver's side door, the woman stated. She did not suffer any injuries and drove to a nearby home where state police were alerted.

In an interview with lead investigator Trooper Richard J. Cutchall of the Pennsylvania State Police, McCConnellsburg barracks, Shives reportedly admitted to firing two shots into the air but added he didn't intend for the bullets from the 45 caliber revolver to strike her vehicle.

Shives also told police he "didn't mean to harm her" even though he was "upset" with her and "only wanted to scare her." His gun was later located in the salvage yard located behind his 1458 East Pittman Road residence.

Shives was released from the Franklin County Prison on October 1 after his bail was reduced from its original set amount of \$750,000.

## Man Faces Life In Jail After K9 Police Killing

VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) – The sentencing of a Clark County man who may have gotten his "third strike" while killing a K9 dog was been scheduled for later this month.

The Columbian newspaper reports that Ronald J. Chenette faces life in prison under the state's three strikes law, which can send repeat offenders to jail if convicted of certain crimes.

Killing a K9 dog does not qualify under the state's three-strike law, but prosecutors say the use of a gun does.

In October of 2007, the 39-year-old man shot the K9 dog – named Dakota – after police responded to a call from one of Chenette's friends. The friend told police Chenette was armed and threatening to kill police. Dakota ran ahead of officers and tracked down Chenette in a wooded area, where she was shot.

Previously, Chenette was convicted of second-degree murder in 1991 and second-degree assault in 2000. A sentencing hearing has been scheduled for Dec. 12. Chenette was convicted last month.

## "The Nutcracker All Jazzed Up" To Be Presented At MHS

Performance slated for 7:30 p.m. Friday, December 5

**SPECIAL TO THE NEWS**

An old Christmas favorite with a special twist is coming to the McCConnellsburg and Mercersburg communities.

Two Step by Step Dance Studio LLC instructors, the principal instructor, Samantha Harding, and instructor Brittany Gordon, have organized a performance of "The Nutcracker All Jazzed Up" for young and old alike to enjoy this holiday season.

The performance not only incorporates ballet but all genres of dance, including jazz, acrobatics, hip hop and tap.

The show will be performed at McCConnellsburg High School on Friday, December 5, at 7:30 p.m., and at James Buchanan Middle School on Saturday, December 13, at 7:30 p.m. These performances are open to the public at \$8 for the general public and \$5 for children 6 and under.

Step by Step Dance Studio LLC Director Gail L. Fritz and principal instructor Samantha Harding have brought the art of dance and a variety of "special art" workshops to Franklin and Fulton County residents.

For more information about "The Nutcracker All Jazzed Up" or Step by Step's programs, please call 717-328-9544 or www.dancemercersburg.com.

Tickets available at the door.



Cast members of "The Nutcracker All Jazzed Up"

Are You Waiting for Your Kids to Talk to YOU About Pot?

