



Merry Christmas & Best Wishes



THURSDAY
WEEKLY

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MCCONNELLSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

DECEMBER 25, 2008

Red Cross Seeks Blood Donors To Boost Holiday Inventories

Gift cards for
donors at Xmas
Eve blood drives

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Come out to donate blood Christmas Eve (Wednesday, December 24) and the 100-county Greater Alleghenies Region of American Red Cross Blood Services will offer a little help with your last-minute holiday errands.

Presenting blood and platelet donors at all Greater Alleghenies Region blood drives on December 24 will receive a \$5 gift card for use toward their holiday purchases, while supplies last.

Jim Starr, CEO, Greater Alleghenies Region, reiterated that recent inclement weather forced several blood drive cancellations, serving to further tighten available blood supplies during the Christmas - New Year's holiday period.

"We need to collect nearly 1,000 units on average each weekday to meet the needs of patients in the 97 hospitals we serve in a 100-county area."

"With the observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays, we need to make up the nearly 2,000 units of blood typically collected on two weekdays.

"So in recognition of their

See RED CROSS, Page A2

Paula Deen Giveaway At Blood Drives Over Holidays

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Several community blood drives during the holiday period will feature a Paula Deen Thanks for Givin' apron and recipe card for presenting donors, while supplies last.

Wednesday, December 24: Bedford/Heartland Mall, Mount Union/First United Methodist Church, Martinsburg/Trinity Episcopal and Winchester/War Memorial Building.

Friday, December 26, 2008
Roaring Spring, Pa. - 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Nason Hospital, 105 Nason Drive.

Saturday, December 27, 2008
New Paris, Pa. - 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., East St. Clair Township Building, 1445 Quaker Valley Road.

Somerset, Pa. - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Somerset Hospital, Wheeler Annex, 225 South Center Avenue.

Monday, December 29, 2008
Cumberland, Md. - 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Western Maryland Hospital, Braddock Campus, 900 Seton Drive.

Funkstown, Md. - 1 to 7 p.m., American Legion, 12 North

See PAULA DEEN, Page A2

DEATHS

Hennen, John Sr., 87, McCbg.

Martz, Mary Ellen, 81,

Hustontown

Ramsey, Lois, 66, Robertsdale

Schetrompf, Lisa, 42,

Warfordsburg

Truax, Gloria, 60, Hancock

Vamer, Jack, 73, McCbg.

OBITUARIES, Page B3



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Fulton County Gets An Early Christmas Gift

\$14,288 allotted
locally through
federal program

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz
STAFF WRITER

Fulton County is one of nine counties in the 9th Congressional District slated to receive funding for food and shelter-related emergencies through a federally-based program.

Congressman Bill Shuster announced Friday afternoon that a total of \$583,625 will find its way into the 9th District as a result of an allotment by the Department of Homeland Security's Emergency Food and Shelter (EFS) Program.

Fulton County, according to Shuster, will receive \$14,288 to supplement and expand existing efforts within the area to provide shelter, food and related services. Additional allotments ranging from \$38,969 to a maximum amount of \$106,084 were awarded to Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Clearfield, Fayette, Huntingdon, Indiana and Somerset counties.

Shuster stated it remains possible that additional counties located within the district could still be selected at a future date by the EFS State Set-Aside committee, which has a total of \$964,124 in its coffers to give to needy areas.

Officials from various agencies, including the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities USA,

United Jewish Communities, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, the Salvation Army and the United Way of America, serve on the EFS National Board, which in turn is chaired by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency. The board worked toward providing additional funding to shelter, food banks and even soup kitchens. Money for rent, mortgage and utility assistance is also available through the boards for individuals and families requiring temporary, non-disaster-related emergency needs.

The EFS program was established in 1983 under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. As a result of the 2008 fiscal allocation, an estimated \$3.1 billion in federal aid has been distributed nationwide through the EFS program since its creation 25 years ago.

Christmas Eve, Day Weather Cold, Windy

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz
STAFF WRITER

While Santa Claus and his troop of elves are finishing up the final touches on his sleigh full of toys and holiday joy, temperatures are well below zero at the North Pole. Meanwhile, as the jolly ole man decked out in red prepares for his ride to Fulton County, local residents are bundling up and battening down the hatches for some frosty weather of their own.

Winter officially got under way Sunday, bringing with it some bitterly cold and windy conditions this week just in time for the holiday season.

A five-day forecast issued by Accuweather, the world's leading weather authority, details Christmas Eve conditions as cloudy and windy with a couple of showers. Temperatures will be at a low of 37 degrees but a "real feel" of 23 degrees.

Residents wishing to gaze

See VO-TECH, Page A2

See WEATHER, Page A2

Carlson To Lead Vo-Tech School JOC

Brant to serve
as vice president

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz
STAFF WRITER

Central Fulton School Board Director Dr. Brent Carlson was recently selected to head the Fulton County Area Vocational-Technical School's Joint Operating Committee in the capacity of president, while Forbes Road School Board President Terry Brant was appointed to the position of committee vice president.

As a result of the action taken by the JOC on December 11, Carlson and Brant will replace former president and vice president Carl Detwiler and John

McKee for the calendar year 2009. The JOC will continue to meet on Thursdays every other month at 7:30 p.m. on a rotating basis between the three county schools.

Work sessions are scheduled at 7 p.m. just prior to the regular meeting. Meetings for 2009 have tentatively been set for February 26, April 16, June 18, August 20, October 22 and December 10.

As one of their first courses of action during 2009, the board will be conducting its annual meeting with faculty and staff representatives in February. Dani Brady will represent the vo-tech staff during the sit-down meeting, and Steve Sellers will serve as a faculty representative.

In other action taken by the vo-tech's JOC, the board reviewed a financial report included in the 2007-08 audit prepared by Charles Frame of Boyer and Riter, CPA. Vo-tech Executive Director Elizabeth Cheatle related the audit concluded with a good report from Frame, who urged better segregation of office-related duties and addressed access to signature stamps.

Toni Vaughn was appointed to serve as substitute board secretary at the current rate of \$78.79 per meeting. Vaughn was also authorized to serve as a check signer for the student activities account as requested by First National Bank.

With more than 15 years of

experience in floral design, Pat Decker received authorization to teach flower arranging through the adult education program. Meanwhile, Francine Gibson, who has logged 32 years in the food service industry, will be teaching SERVSAFE for adult-ed classes. Both women are slated to receive an hourly rate of \$20.

Brandi Mellott was approved as the new nurse-aide coordinator for the nurse-aide student training program. Job descriptions were also accordingly revised for the positions of nurse-aide training coordinator, nurse-aide training primary instructor

New Open Records Law Seen As Key To Public Access

By PETER JACKSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) - The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's list of dangerous roads and intersections is an official secret, shielded from the public because of loopholes in the state's Right-to-Know Law.

In 2006, a Commonwealth Court panel upheld PennDOT's refusal to turn over a partial list to a Pittsburgh television station, saying it had failed to prove that the information was sufficiently connected to an account, contract, voucher or decision - categories in the law that define what is a public record.

"The situation is a Catch-22 for requesters in that the agencies and courts hold them to an impossible standard - prove there is a connection, but you cannot have the records that will enable you to do so," said Gayle Sproul, a media lawyer who represented Hearst-Argyle Television Stations, WTAE's owner, in the case.

Public-access advocates hope that widely shared frustration will subside after Jan. 1, when an overhaul of the state's Right-to-Know Law takes effect. The

changes are expected to dramatically expand what people can find out about what goes on behind the scenes of the state and local governments.

The new Right-to-Know Law will repeal the 52-year-old original, long regarded as one of the nation's weakest.

No longer will journalists, activists and other citizens interested in mining government records have to cross their fingers and hope the document they want fits into one of a half-dozen narrow categories. Nor will they have to go court - and probably need to hire a lawyer - to challenge an agency's refusal to turn over a record.

The new law is built on the presumption that most government records are open. It also places on public agencies - from state bureaucracies to county governments and local school districts - the legal burden of showing why a record should be withheld, instead of forcing requesters to establish why it should be made public.

"This is really a change in the culture of governance in Pennsylvania," said Barry Kauffman, director of Pennsylvania Common Cause. "In too many cases,

employees and officials of government agencies had an attitude that they own the government records instead of just being the caretakers of the government records."

Those whose requests are denied, in most cases, will be able to appeal directly to a new, non-judicial agency - the Office of Open Records - whose director has a track record as an advocate of public access.

"I think we're going to be amazed at what's available to us now," said Cate Barron, managing editor of The Patriot-News in Harrisburg, which plans to aggressively test the law throughout the coming year.

Teri Henning, general counsel for the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association, which spearheaded lobbying for the new law, said the hope "is that, over time, these fundamental changes will create a culture of openness in Pennsylvania government."

That spirit of openness is tempered in the law by a list of 30 wide-ranging exceptions. They are tailored to respond to such concerns as personal privacy, public safety and internal deliberations by public officials. Lawyers familiar with the law,

however, agree the practical effect of many will likely be settled by the courts.

The exceptions, which make up about one-fifth of the law, are "very wordy, very detailed and dense, filled with what I will call, kindly, mumbo jumbo," said Sproul, who also is the president of the Pennsylvania Freedom of Information Coalition. "That in itself is an impediment to getting public records."

The law also expands access to government contracts: Private businesses that do business with state and local governments are required to make some of their records available to the public, and the state Treasury Department now maintains a public database of state contracts worth \$5,000 or more on its Web site.

Access to public records is of natural interest to people from many walks of life - reporters, taxpayer activists, genealogists and librarians, to name a few - and the effect of the new law will be widely felt.

It covers all of state government, including - to a limited extent - the Legislature and the state's judicial system, both previously exempt. It cov-

ers an array of state-affiliated entities, including community colleges, the 14 state-owned universities in the State System of Higher Education and the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

The state-related universities - Penn State, Pittsburgh, Temple and Lincoln - are generally exempt, but required to issue annual financial reports that include their highest 25 employee salaries.

Local agencies covered by the law include counties, boroughs, townships and school districts, as well as charter schools, vocational schools and intermediate units.

Openness "serves the interests of not only the press, but everybody," said Mike Leary, The Philadelphia Inquirer's managing editor and a former Inquirer foreign correspondent who covered the collapse of communism in eastern Europe in the late '80s and early '90s.

"The great strength of democracy is openness in government," Leary said.

By now, every agency should have designated an open-records officer to oversee compliance, See OPEN RECORDS, Page A2