

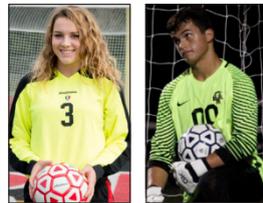


MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2017

\$1.00

THE MON VALLEY INDEPENDENT

WHAT HAPPENS HERE, MATTERS HERE.



Goalkeeper awards Shayla Watkins and Cam Guess are this year's winners. B1

INSIDE



Equipment sought

The Charleroi Fire Department is hoping to purchase life-saving equipment. A3



Miss Universe

Miss South Africa claimed the crown Sunday night. A7

SPORTS



Breakout players

Belle Vernon Area's Izzy Laurita and Serra Catholic's Joey Folino were impact players as freshmen. B1

DEATHS

- Rozanne Barczak, 68, Belle Vernon
- Jonathan Andrew Gerda, 27, West Mifflin
- Mike Gombo, 91, formerly of Belle Vernon
- Edward A. Hazelbaker, 56, Stow, Ohio, formerly of Fayette City
- Marie A. Holet, 90, Monessen
- Charles A. "Cow Man" Muntan
- John Poskon Jr., 73, Washington County
- Mary Stasko, 86, Monongahela

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Two sections, 18 pages

TUESDAY

Don't miss our health page every Tuesday in the *Mon Valley Independent*.

Monessen hiring questioned

A media law attorney said council violated state law by hiring a city administrator/clerk after the general election.

By KAYLIE MOORE
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An attorney with the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association said a vote taken last week at a Monessen City Council meeting violated Act 67 of the state Third-Class City Code.

During a work session Tuesday, Mayor Lou Mavrakis and councilmen John Scott Nestor and Ron Chiaravalle ratified an employment agreement with City Administrator/Clerk Judith Taylor, effective Sept. 25.



Lea

Prior to the vote, Councilman Ed Lea said Taylor's contract could not be ratified between the general election and the first meeting of the new year, "so as not to block the next administration from appointing someone."

In January, Mayor-elect Matt Shor-



Chiaravalle

Orzechowski also won a two-year council seat and will have to choose between the two positions. Council must appoint a fifth member in January.

After being appointed to council in July 2016 following the resignation of Lucille D'Alfonso, Lea's bid for a

raw will be sworn in, having defeated Mavrakis on Nov. 7.

Anthony W. Orzechowski and Gilbert Coles each secured four-year council seats.

full term fell short in the May primary election.

Nestor and Bukowski did not seek re-election, leaving Chiaravalle as the only remaining council member going into the new administration.

On Tuesday, Lea called for the matter to be tabled, pending further review of Act 67.

He requested time to review the employment agreement before bringing it to a vote, but his fellow council members disagreed.

Chiaravalle said council was required to ratify Taylor's contract "as soon as possible," by the state

MONESSEN • A2

Student Govt. advisor wins state award

Elizabeth Forward High School English teacher Jennifer Spiegel now is a candidate for the national title.

By JOSE NEGRON
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In three years as advisor of the Elizabeth Forward High School Student Government Association, Jennifer Spiegel has helped the club grow.



Spiegel

Routh, Spiegel, a high school English teacher, was named Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils District 3 Advisor of the Year in March.

"As a teacher, you don't often hear kids tell you about how you have impacted their lives and changed things for the better, so this was really special to me," Spiegel said.

"It's a wonderful thing to have your bosses tell you what a good job you do, but it's another thing when your students tell you."

Advisors selected at the district level were automatically nominated for the PASC Senior High School Student Council Advisor of the Year award - which went to Spiegel.

"I am really proud to be representing both Elizabeth Forward and my PASC District 3 region in the local area as well," she said.

Spiegel said she attended a PASC state conference in York this month to accept the Distinguished Keystone Council Award on behalf of Elizabeth Forward's Student Government Association.

The Elizabeth Forward organization

AWARD • A2

LIGHT-UP NIGHT MAGICAL IN CHARLEROI



Jenn Codeluppi / Mon Valley Independent

Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive in a horse-drawn carriage Saturday for Light-Up Night in Charleroi. For more images, see Valley Weekend on Page A8.

Football bus stops at LaRosa

The goal was to hype the Sunday Night Football game between the Steelers and the Packers.

By JEFF STITT
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McKeesport area children got a chance Friday to get psyched for the Steelers' Sunday night game against the Packers.

The Sunday Night Football tour bus stopped at the LaRosa Boys and Girls Club of McKeesport as part of Comcast's and NBC Sports' attempt to get NFL fans pumped up for a game being played by their home team.

With the children were club executive director Jim Barry, McKeesport Councilman Timothy Brown, city administrator Tom Maglicco and Mayor Michael Cherepko.

"This is awesome, and the kids are loving it," Barry said. "This is an amazing feat for something this prestigious to

FOOTBALL BUS • A9



Jeff Stitt / Mon Valley Independent

Standing at a replica of the Football Night in America desk, from left, are Shane Cymmerman, 10, Brennan Rittner, 10, Semaj Rodgers, 8, and Gabriel Shelly, 10.

Auberle reviews year of success

By JEFF STITT
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Auberle highlighted achievements at its annual report meeting.

With program participants, employees, volunteers and community leaders present last week, board members and Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh's Bishop David Zubik revealed how many people have been

helped by the organization this year and gave thanks to those who made it possible.

Auberle is a faith-based community organization serving children and families in eight southwestern Pennsylvania counties through workforce development, independent living and transitional-age youth programs, foster care, in-home intervention, drug, alcohol and mental health programs, education, residential care and emergency

shelter.

Board Chairman Steven Massaro said 3,865 children and families have been served by Auberle this year, a 13 percent increase from last year.

For the first time, two Auberle programs, 412 Youth Zone and the male shelter, each served more than 1,000 people.

The 412 Youth Zone is a center for people

AUBERLE • A2



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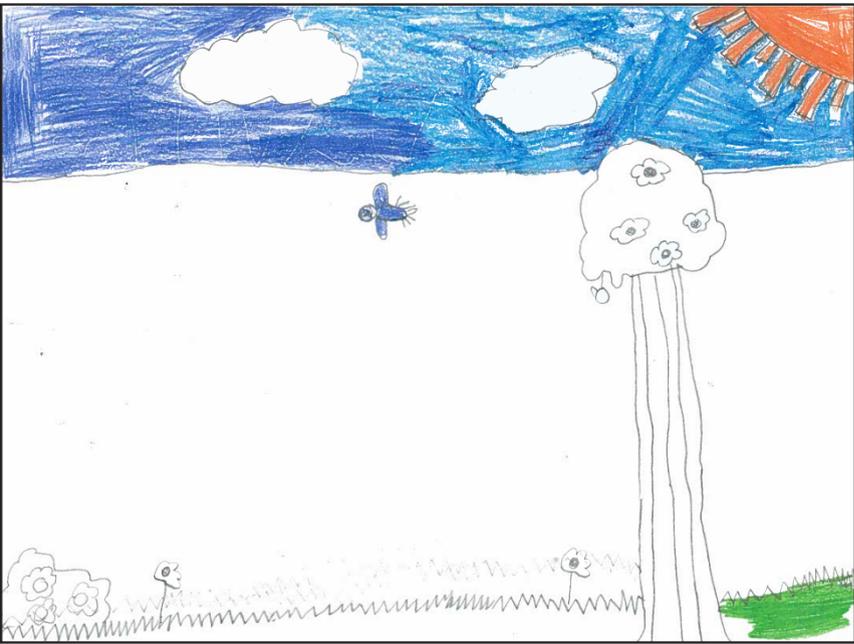
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Today's weather



Today's weather drawing is provided by Tamlyn DeWitt of St. Sebastian Regional School.

Today
53, 37



Tuesday
63, 44



Wednesday
52, 35



Thursday
55, 36



Friday
44, 30



AWARD FROM A1

received the state award, its first, because of its participation in service projects throughout the school year. While attending the conference, Spiegel learned she won the state award. "It was really exciting, and I was really surprised," Spiegel said. "I have only been doing student government for about three years, so I never expected to win a state-level award." During Spiegel's time as student government advisor, members have been heavily involved in the school and community. "It's not like they just say, 'Oh yes, I'm a part of it,' they're doing things," Spiegel said. One of Spiegel's favorite student government activities is the pen pal program, which is in its third year. "We write letters to fourth-grade students," Spiegel said. "We started with one elementary school, and we just added another this year because we did so well with it." Student Government Association members sponsored "Deck the Halls" Tuesday as students decorated the high

school for Christmas. It will sponsor a "Letters to Santa" event 9 to 11 a.m. Dec. 9 at the L'il Warrior Book Nook in the former Elizabeth Elementary School at 207 Third Ave., Elizabeth. "We are hosting 90 children from the community and their families," Spiegel said. "That is very exciting." The Book Nook was established as a place for community events that bring younger students and their parents together with high school students. Spiegel said that as advisor, she has learned many things about the importance of students being involved in their school and community. "As a teacher, we focus so much on what goes on in the classroom, but I have seen how kids that are connected to the school through extra-curriculars, and when they feel connected to the school, their academics improve because they care about their performance and they care about representing their school," Spiegel said. "I think the most rewarding part of this is getting to see those kids who

might be the most shy kids in your classroom, and you put them into SGA, and they take on projects and they come alive. It's amazing." With the title of best student government advisor in the state, Spiegel has an opportunity to be named best student advisor in America. She will learn in March if she is chosen as a regional representative and finalist for the Warren E. Shull Advisor of the Year Award. If Spiegel is chosen as the regional representative, she will go to the National Student Council Conference June 25-27 in Plymouth, Minn., where the national honor will be presented. Spiegel said that regardless of that result, she has been humbled by her recognition so far, and credits her students for helping her. "I have a great bunch of kids, and it's really easy to be advisor of the year to a bunch of great kids," Spiegel said. "They make me look good, and I don't think I could have gotten that (award) without their hard work and dedication."

AUBERLE FROM A1

ages 16 to 24. It serves people who are transitioning out of the foster care system and are eligible for independent living services or are experiencing unstable housing. It works to provide basic life skills such as cooking and homemaking, job training and education and fostering creative expression. Massaro said one of the organization's proudest accomplishments was helping 90 young people from Auberle graduate this summer from high school and college or from general equivalency diploma and tech programs. Massaro said the programs push clients toward brighter futures. The employment Institute served 369 young members and has developed 57 business partners that refer, train, educate, recruit and hire young people served by Auberle. The foster care program experienced a 22 percent increase in clients, and the drug

and alcohol program saw 100 percent of clients become "positively discharged," which means they passed multiple drug screenings over a several-month span and have prepared after-care plans to keep fighting against addiction and drug use, CEO John Lydon said. Auberle employees from the human resources, behavioral health, foster care and employment institute received awards for being "high performing teams that go above and beyond what they need to do to make Auberle a success," Lydon said. Auberle recognized the City of Duquesne and its mayor, Phil Krivacek, for teaching men who stay at the Duquesne-based men's shelter how to cook Thanksgiving dinner and establish Christmas traditions such as decorating and gift giving. The Allegheny County Department of Human Service was recognized for helping Auberle remain an innovative

and cutting-edge organization and for maintaining a healthy relationship with county officials. "Without their innovation and without their want to see the youth and families succeed, we would not be able to function as well as we do," Lydon said. The Pittsburgh Business Times will present Auberle with an Innovation Award next month. "I think when people judge this moment in history, they might be tempted to say that it was a time when cynicism was on the increase as well as a lack of civility," Zubik said. "You and I who are in this room today know that we can be grateful to Auberle because they not only talk the talk but they walk it as well. "They especially counter the cynicism that might exist in our world by showing that there are ways to not only be civil, but also be loving and caring."

MONESSEN FROM A1

Department of Community and Economic Development, which provided the \$130,000 grant used to hire her. Taylor has been working as the city administrator/clerk since Sept. 25 at an annual salary of \$55,000. Lea voted against Taylor's hiring because he did not agree with the process used to vet candidates for the position.

"Everything was overseen by DCED," Chiaravalle said Tuesday. "Frankly, we've waited long enough to do this already." "DCED does not supersede the Third-Class City Code," Lea said. Resident Linda Lacey asked why council would approve the matter without investigating Lea's concerns. "Mr. Lea obviously knows what he's talking about with the city code," Lacey said. "If there was a problem with it, DCED would have said it," Chiaravalle said. "We also operate under a solicitor who had no problem with it."

"So, you're just taking it into your own hands to amend the code?" Lacey asked. "DCED is the city code," Chiaravalle said. "The Third-Class City Code was adopted by the state Legislature," Lea said. "This is a bunch of malarkey," Chiaravalle said. "No, it's not malarkey. It's law," Lacey said. "Not here, apparently," Lea said. "We just do whatever we want, even if it violates Act 67."

"You know what? I'm ashamed at this point," Chiaravalle said. "Why? Because I called you out?" Lacey asked. Melissa Melewsky, media law counsel with the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association, agreed with Lea. Act 67, specifically the Third-Class City Code's chapter on the city administrator position, states: "Any employment agreement with a city administrator executed on or after a municipal election but before the first meeting in January the year after the municipal election shall be void."

"There's no exception to this prohibition, and there's no discretion granted in the code," Melewsky said. "They have to follow the rule set out by the statute, and if they don't, the decision (contract) can be challenged in court." On Tuesday, Lea expressed concerns that Taylor's residency might have violated state law. Taylor lives in Scenery Hill. "She's required to move to the city within 30 days of hire," Lea said Tuesday. "Why would we give \$55,000 to someone in another municipality instead of keeping that money in our city?"

"We're waiving that. The next administration can waive that if they see fit," Chiaravalle said. City code states: "At the time a person is appointed to fill the office of city administrator, the appointee need not be a resident of the city. After appointment, the city administrator may reside outside the city only with the approval of council." Melewsky said that provision "leaves the question of

residency up to council." "If council says it's OK, (she) can live outside the city," she said. "If they don't approve, residency is required." "However, elected officials can't 'waive' statutory requirements, and DCED can't change the law or allow it to be ignored, so I'm not sure what they're talking about there."

On Friday, Mavrakis deferred all questions to Solicitor Steve Toprani, adding council "just did what DCED told us to do." Toprani said Taylor's employment agreement is a "binding, valid contract." "It's the timing or the occurrence (of the vote) that makes it voidable," Toprani said. "It's voidable should the new administration not wish to honor it."

"If it's the will of the new administration to void it and terminate employment, they would be able to do so." Toprani confirmed the city was required to draft the contract as an eligibility requirement for the DCED grant, adding city administrator/clerk is an at-will position. "If it was a unionized position, it might be a different issue," Toprani said. "Employment contracts of this nature are routine, ministerial business."

"I understand Councilman Lea's concerns, but in this case, it doesn't really make a distinction." Chiaravalle and Toprani said Taylor was previously made aware that her at-will employment could be terminated at the January reorganization meeting.

"That was in our employment offer letter to Ms. Taylor because it's up to whoever's in charge at the time," Chiaravalle said. "We made sure she knew we can't guarantee the new administration will vote to keep her." Having the contract in place was a "formality" necessary for DCED, Chiaravalle added.

Amid the debate surrounding her position, Taylor remained silent on the matter Tuesday.

Chiaravalle said she is a hands-on, model employee who frequently arrives early to work, forgoes lunch breaks and stays late most evenings. "It's a shame we've got someone like Ms. Taylor who will do so much good for this town and there's so many issues about it," Chiaravalle said. "She's just work, work, work - and with efficiency. "It's just amazing how she came in and adapted so quickly. We needed her 15 years ago, in my opinion."

Tuesday's vote was not the first time Lea raised concerns over council potentially engaging in illegal practices. In September, he alleged an entire meeting violated Act 67 of the state Third-Class City Code and a provision of the state Sunshine Act. Melewsky agreed with Lea on that matter. "(The councilman) raising the contract and residency concerns is bringing legitimate issues to light," Melewsky said of Tuesday's vote. "How the city resolves these issue remains to be seen."

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