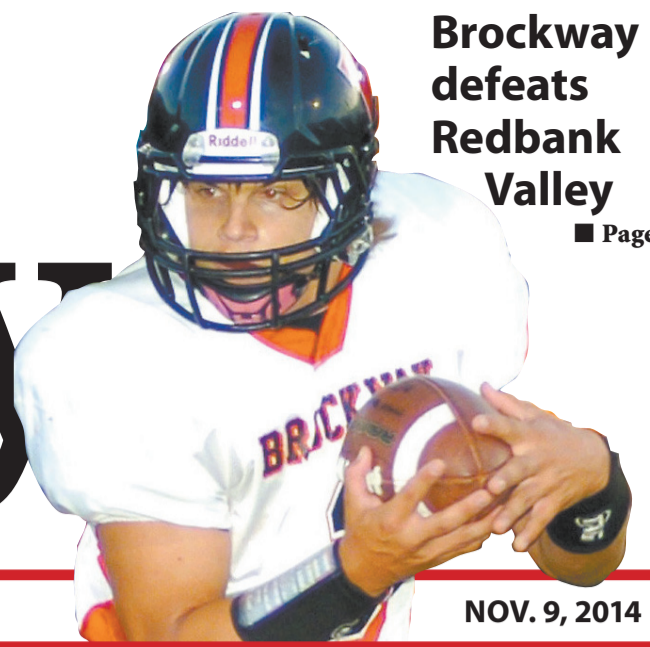


Sunday
\$183⁰⁰
Savings
 Year to date savings: \$8,519

Tri-County
Sunday
 www.tri-countysunday.com

Brockway
defeats
Redbank
Valley
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VOL. 20, NO. 45

SERVING CLARION, CLEARFIELD, ELK, FOREST AND JEFFERSON COUNTIES

NOV. 9, 2014

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McKinley
Health
Center earns
5-star rating

BROOKVILLE — McKinley Health Center, a skilled nursing and short stay rehab community at Laurelbrooke Landing in Brookville, has received a Five-Star Quality Rating, the highest possible, from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

McKinley Health Center is the only nursing home in Jefferson, Clarion, Clearfield and Elk counties with a Five-Star Quality Rating.

"At McKinley Health Center, we strive to be the best place to live for our residents," said Director of Laurelbrooke Landing Alison Mills McGuire. "I am very proud of our team for achieving this exceptional five-star rating. They really go above and beyond in caring for our residents."

The Five-Star Quality Rating System was created in 2008 to help consumers, their families and caregivers select a nursing home. The system gives consumers a way to measure and compare their available options and helps identify questions they may want to ask when visiting a community.

The rating is based on performance in three

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• Martha Mossberger, 90

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\$1.50



Water levels in Parker Lake at Parker Dam State Park will be allowed to return to normal once the repair project is done completely. (Photo by Katie Weidenboerner)

Park Dam's drained for repairs

By Katie Weidenboerner

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PENFIELD — Visitors to Parker Dam State Park will have another week to witness a rare sight — its 20 acre lake has been drained in order for repairs to be made.

The state Department of Conservation & Natural Resources began the gradual five foot drawdown of Parker Lake on Oct. 28 in order for a contractor to make about \$18,000 in concrete repairs as well as putting rip rap in place.

The damages resulted from a June flood event which caused a washout to undermined the concrete block wall adjacent to Parker Lake and Mud Run.

"It (the work) should be complete next week," Parker Dam State Park manager Deanna Schall said in a phone interview Friday morning.

The last partial drawdown of the lake was in 1998.

The lake will return to normal pool after the project is completed, and it will then resume its regular fish stocking schedule with PA Fish & Boat Commission.

"It all depends on precipitation," Schall said.

Parker Dam is a multi-use park with overnight facilities which draws as many as 140,000 visitors annually. The park offers rustic cabins, camping, boating, swimming, picnicking, hiking and fishing and hunting opportunities.

With ice skating season usually starting around January or February, Schall said the lake should be open in time for winter recreation activities.

"We chose this time of year because it is slower," Schall said. "We hope because it is only a two week timeframe for the work to be done we'll have the lake back to normal pool by the end of November."



The state Department of Conservation & Natural Resources has performed a gradual five foot drawdown of Parker Lake to make repairs to an undermined concrete block wall adjacent to Parker Lake and Mud Run. The drawdown began Oct. 28. The lake will return to normal pool once the work is completed. (Photo by Katie Weidenboerner)

Medicare penalizes four local hospitals

By Katie Weidenboerner

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Four local hospitals have been penalized by Medicare for having too many patient readmissions within a month of their initial treatment.

Penn Highlands Clearfield, Penn Highlands Elk, Clarion Hospital and Punxsutawney Area Hospital will all be assessed penalties in 2015 by the Medicare program, according to data compiled by Kaiser Health News.

Punxsutawney Area Hospital was assessed a readmission penalty of 0.39 percent in FY2013 and 0.30 percent in FY2014 and FY2015. The hospital's CFO Jack Sisk said in 2015 this percentage equalled approxi-

mately \$18,000.

While \$18,000 not seem like much money in the big picture, Sisk said that is money being taken away from projects, new equipment purchases, and salaries. That amount compounded over three years (from 2013-2015) equates to \$54,000, which is the salary and benefits for a registered nurse for one year.

"We're a tiny little hospital and that \$18,000 is \$18,000 we'd like to have in our pocket," Sisk said. "We're trying whatever we can to improve to make that number go away."

Those improvements include alignment with post acute healthcare services to assure patients are taken care of at home; implementa-

tion of phone call followups to provide time for followup questions and keep a patient up-to-date on their appointment schedule; as well as amping up its telehealth services.

"We're trying to identify who is at significant risk of readmission and do whatever we can to keep our readmission rate down," Sisk said. "The law is the law, and we're trying to do whatever we can to not get any more of those funding haircuts."

Penn Highlands Clearfield was assessed a readmission penalty of 1 percent for Fiscal Year 2013; 0.79 percent for FY2014; and 0.59 percent for FY2015.

At Penn Highlands Clearfield, hospital leadership has long recog-

nized the need to reduce readmission rates, and with guidance from Hospital Council of Western Pennsylvania, the hospital's quality team launched a performance improvement project in 2011 to reduce unnecessary readmissions, said Dr. Gary DuGan, chief medical officer of Penn Highlands Healthcare.

The evidence-based plan works to improve identification of patients who may be at risk for readmission; improve care transitions and communication among healthcare personnel, patient and patient's caregiver; and connect patients with home health or other community resources for as-

See Medicare, A2



Thanksgiving Day Buffet

Adults
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Seniors
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12 & Under
\$8.95

4 & Under
Free

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