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Holiday season kicks off this week in valley

By JOSH WALZAK
L-V Editor

NEW BETHLEHEM – After resurrecting the “Christmas Village” theme last year, the New Bethlehem area will see the Christmas events grow this year as the community kicks off the holiday season this weekend.

In addition to the annual Christmas parade, Snack with Santa and the Redbank Renaissance Arts and Crafts Show, the Festival of Trees will mark its return and will be joined this year by the new Country Christmas Village drive-through light display at Redbank Valley Municipal Park.

The festivities get underway on Friday, Dec. 4, with the light display at Redbank Park. That event,



It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas!

DIANA SHIREY of the Redbank Valley Chamber of Commerce (left) lent a hand to local electrician Bill Reddinger as he once again helped the chamber hang the well-known snowflake decorations and holiday banners along Broad Street in New Bethlehem on Nov. 23.

[L-V photo by Evanne Gareis]

featuring lights set up by local organizations and businesses around the park's inner loop, will run from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays over the next three weekends.

The cost is \$5 per carload, which will benefit improvements at the public park.

Santa makes his arrival Saturday with the Redbank Valley Chamber of Commerce's annual Christmas Parade at 1 p.m. along Broad Street.

Parade lineup begins at 12:30 p.m. in Gumtown Park and local groups, churches, businesses and others are welcome to sign up to join in the event.

The parade will bring Santa Claus into town, where he then can be joined at the New Bethlehem Fire Hall for the

fire department's annual Snack with Santa.

Children can meet Santa, have photos taken and pick up a treat bag at that time.

After Snack with Santa, the Festival of Trees will open in the former Family Dollar location at the New Bethlehem plaza along Broad Street.

The Festival of Trees will feature a wide array of Christmas trees decorated by local businesses and organizations.

Ed Goth, who is helping to oversee the event, said that this year's festival will feature the new twist that will allow visitors to cast their vote for their favorite tree. Each tree will have a container for donations — the tree with the most money collected will

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Union: School scores are no simple matter

By JOSH WALZAK
L-V Editor

RIMERSBURG – Union High School staff and administrators received a pat on the back from the school district's superintendent recently for raising UHS's School Performance Profile score for 2014-2015.

At the November meeting of the Union School Board, superintendent Jean McCleary credited the staff for its efforts in helping to boost the state's SPP score for the high school, from 61.5 two years ago to 73.4.

"It's nice to see progress at the high school," she

said.

Although the discussion on the matter was brief, and the score only three digits long, both McCleary and UHS principal Mark Schlosser later said that the issue is far more complicated than a simple score shows.

Schlosser said that the biggest difficulty in understanding the state's SPP score is that the formula for creating those scores keeps changing year after year.

"These changes make year-to-year comparisons difficult," he said, explaining that the first year of SPP scores in 2012-2013

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AFTER BEING DIAGNOSED with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis, three local men (shown here from left), Sidney Miles, Steve Constable and Mark Nolf, all received lung transplants at the same Pittsburgh hospital in less than a year's time. The trio, who became good friends through their experiences, are now working to spread the word on the importance of organ donation.

Local trio thankful for organ donations

By EVANNE GAREIS
L-V Staff Writer

FAIRMOUNT CITY – While most people are thankful for friends and family this time of year, three men with local ties are grateful for three donors who none of them ever met.

After being diagnosed with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF), Mark Nolf of New Bethlehem, Steve Constable of State College and Sidney Miles of Clarion, all received lung transplants at the same hospital within the last year.

"If it weren't for the transplants none of us would be here today," Miles said. "It's such a blessing that we have do-

nors."

Although Miles, Constable and Nolf grew up in the New Bethlehem area and attended Redbank Valley High School at the same time — a few grades apart — the three men did not really connect with one another until their lives intertwined with separate diagnoses

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[L-V photo by Evanne Gareis]

ZACK HEPLER of Rimersburg shot this 8-point Monday while hunting in Porter Township of Clarion County. His recorded weight of 177 pounds led all reported deer through early Monday afternoon at the annual Rimersburg Rod & Gun Club's Big Buck Contest. For more Big Bucks, scope out today's Sports pages.

'All gifts matter' for YMCA's campaign

CLARION – With \$370,000 remaining to be raised for the new full-service Clarion County YMCA, success is near, but community support remains vital. YMCA officials said recently.

The major gift portion of the total campaign raised approximately 89 percent of the \$8.1 million goal and the current Community Campaign now becomes

a critical link in reaching the total goal.

After a few weeks of the community efforts, \$93,000 has been raised in gifts or a commitment to 25 percent of the goal.

"We have had much publicity about the major \$50,000 gifts raised in the initial months of the campaign, but the Community Campaign seeking gifts in the \$5,000 to \$20,000

range are just as important as we seek donors to help make a new full-service YMCA a reality and go the last 10 yards," said Jeff McCombie, chairman of the Community Gifts Phase. "As we close in on the final stages of fundraising towards the full-service YMCA, we want to emphasize that all gifts matter."

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Explosion in Porter Township probed

PORTER TWP. – Emergency crews were on the scene of an explosion and fire early Thanksgiving morning along Route 66 in Porter Township.

While the exact cause of the fire is still unknown, state police believe that the explosion originated within a compressed natural gas compressor, belonging to William Franklin Clepper of Freeport on Nov. 26 at approximately 6:25 a.m.

Firefighters from the New Bethlehem Volunteer Fire Department were on the scene and discovered that the compressor station had sustained damage and was on fire.

The fire was extinguished, and no one was injured as a result, police said.

Total damages were estimated at \$100,000, which included the complete loss of the compressor station and damage to the surrounding self-storage sheds.

The state police Fire [Continued on Page A-5]



With a flip of the calendar, not only are we headed down the home stretch as far as 2015 is concerned, but we have entered one of the busiest months of the year — and one of the most festive and joyful.

Many Christmas events will be announced in the pages of The L-V over the next several weeks, and an abundance of letters to Santa Claus will also be found in the paper.

To accommodate all [Continued on Page A-9]



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