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Mt. Lebanon School District Names Daniel Bonaventura Athletic Director

Robert Morris associate athletics director will begin role in May, succeeding retiring John Grogan

The Mt. Lebanon School District has named Daniel Bonaventura as its new athletic director for grades 7-12.

The district's board of school directors approved Bonaventura's appointment at its March 9 meeting. He will begin the role in May 2026, allowing time for a transition with current athletic director John Grogan, who is retiring after years of service to the district's athletics programs.

Bonaventura brings extensive experience in athletic administration and student-athlete development at the collegiate level. He currently serves

as associate athletics director for student-athlete development at Robert Morris University, where he oversees programs focused on leadership development, career readiness and community engagement for student-athletes. He also serves as the academic liaison for student-athletes and the sport administrator for the men's basketball program.

Before joining Robert Morris, Bonaventura worked at the University of Pittsburgh as director of mentorship, where he led a program supporting more than 150 student-ath-

letes and 200 mentors. While serving as a career consultant at Pitt, he helped graduating student-athletes achieve a 99 percent career outcomes rate by connecting them with career opportunities and professional development opportunities beyond athletics.

Earlier in his career, Bonaventura worked at Lamar University in Texas and with Spurs Sports & Entertainment, gaining additional experience in athletics operations and student-athlete support.

District officials said Bonaventura's background

aligns well with Mt. Lebanon's strong tradition of athletics combined with academic achievement and character development.

Bonaventura holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a focus in sport management from Robert Morris University. He later earned a Master of Social Work from Tulane University, where he also served as a graduate assistant in the Academic Services Center for Student-Athletes.

He lives in the South Hills with his wife, Dr. Grace Drnach-Bonaventura, and



Daniel Bonaventura
(Photo provided)

their daughter, Carmela. Superintendent Melissa Friez said Bonaventura has built a career centered on supporting the academic, personal and leadership growth of student-athletes. District officials welcomed him to the Mt. Lebanon "Blue Devil" community as he prepares to begin the role later this spring. ♥

Mazzocco Wins in Special Election for Pa. House District 42

Dormont Democrat defeats Mt. Lebanon Republican to fill seat vacated by Dan Miller By Stacey Reibach

Democrat Jen Mazzocco of Dormont defeated Republican Joseph Leckenby of Mt. Lebanon to win Pennsylvania's 42nd House District seat in a special election held on February 24th. The election was triggered by the December resignation of Rep. Dan Miller following the November general election in which he won a seat on the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. Mazzocco won the race by capturing 81.7% of the vote to Leckenby's 18.3%. The 42nd District includes Mt. Lebanon, Baldwin Township, Castle Shannon, Dormont, and parts of Upper St. Clair.

"I'm proud of the campaign we ran, especially our ability to knock on 4000 doors in the dead of winter. It was important to me that we talked to as many voters as possible, because it wasn't just about their vote -- they're also my future constituents. I

want them to know their Representative, have a chance to ask questions, and know that I care what they think," said Representative-Elect Mazzocco who, at press time, was scheduled to be sworn in on Monday, March 23.

Rep.-Elect Mazzocco seems ready to hit the ground running. Asked about her goals, she replied,

"I am really excited to represent District 42. We have five wonderful communities in this district, and I want to make sure they have the resources to stay that way. But more importantly, people in this district care about the well-being of folks beyond our boundaries. I'm ready to fight to keep our public schools strong, make sure

things are affordable for working people everywhere, and to protect our civil rights. I'm excited to get to work."

With her win, Representative-Elect Mazzocco will serve the remainder of Rep. Miller's term (through the end of 2026) in his former office, located in uptown Mt. Lebanon at 650 Washington Road, Suite 102.

Mazzocco has already announced that she will be seeking the Democratic nomination in the May 19 primary. At press time, it wasn't known if she will have any Democratic challengers or if there will be any Republicans vying for their nomination. The April issue of Lebo Beat will cover candidates running in the primary election. ♥

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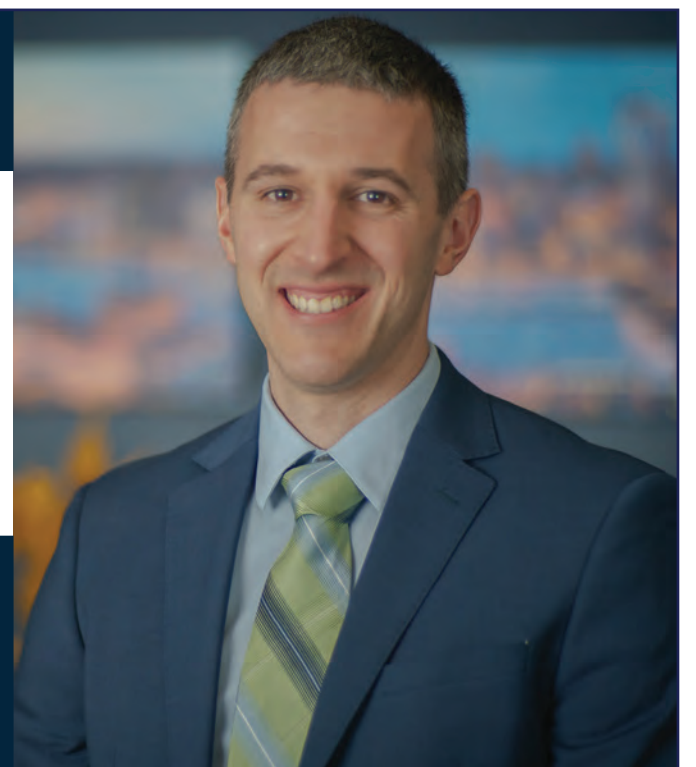
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Mt. Lebanon School District Calendar

APRIL 6
 Lincoln Elementary School
 Ag Lab
 Washington Elementary
 School Kids of Steel
 Practice
 Time: 4:15-5:15 p.m.

APRIL 7
 Lincoln Elementary School
 Ag Lab
 High School Small Band
 Rehearsal
 Time: 3-6 p.m.
 Location: Fine Arts Theatre

**Jefferson Elementary
 School Showcase
 Rehearsal**
 Time: 3:30 p.m.

APRIL 8
 Lincoln Elementary School
 Ag Lab
 Washington Elementary
 School Breakfast Social
 Time: 7:45 a.m.

**Howe Elementary School
 Open House**
 Dismissal for Students at
 2:15 p.m.
 Time: 5:30-7:30 PM

**Mt. Lebanon High School
 Small Band Ensemble
 Concert**
 Time: 7:30 p.m.
 Location: High School Fine
 Arts Theatre

APRIL 9
 Lincoln Elementary School
 Ag Lab
 Mt. Lebanon High School
 NHS Rehearsal
 Time: 7:15 a.m.
 Location: High School
 Auditorium

**Jefferson Elementary
 School Runthrough Student
 Showcase**
 Time: 1:30 p.m.

**Foster Elementary School
 Open House**
 Student Dismissal at 2:15 PM
 Time: 5:30-7:30 PM

**Foster Elementary School
 Celebration of Cultures**
 Time: 6-8 p.m.

**Mt. Lebanon High School
 NHS Ceremony**
 Time: 7 p.m.
 Location: High School
 Auditorium

APRIL 10
 Lincoln Elementary School
 Ag Lab
 Jefferson Elementary
 School Student Showcase
 Time: 6 p.m.

APRIL 13
 Washington Elementary
 School Kids of Steel
 Practice
 Time: 4:15-5:15 p.m.

APRIL 14
 Superintendent Coffee
 Time: 6:30-7:30 p.m.
 Location: High School D200
 (Minden)

APRIL 15
 High School Mandatory
 Senior Meeting
 Time: 7:40 a.m.
 Location: High School
 Auditorium

APRIL 16
 Foster Elementary School
 Breakfast with Someone
 Special
 Time: 7:30-8:30 a.m.

**Hoover Elementary School
 Open House**
 Dismissal for Students at
 2:15 p.m.
 Time: 5:30-7:30 p.m.

**Hoover Elementary School
 Heritage Night**
 Time: 6-8 p.m.

**Mellon Middle School Jazz
 Concert**
 Time: 7:30 p.m.
 Location: Mellon Middle
 School Auditorium

APRIL 20
 Washington Elementary
 School Kids of Steel
 Practice
 Time: 4:15-5:15 p.m.

APRIL 22
 Mt. Lebanon High School
 Social Studies Blook Book
 Exams
 Jefferson Elementary
 School Day of Doing
 Time: 3:30-4:30 p.m.

APRIL 24
 Washington Elementary
 School Kona Ice
 Mt. Lebanon High School
 Art Show
 Time: 7-9 p.m.
 C20 Lobby & Center Court

APRIL 25-26
 Mt. Lebanon High School
 Percussion Recital
 Time: 7 p.m.
 Location: High School Fine
 Arts Theatre

APRIL 27
 Washington Elementary
 School Kids of Steel
 Practice
 Time: 4:15-5:15 p.m.

APRIL 30
 Mt. Lebanon High Spring
 Musical
 Time: 7 p.m.
 Location: High School
 Auditorium

School Board & PTA Meetings

APRIL 6
 Budget Forum
 Time: 6-7:30 p.m.
 Location: High School
 Room D205

**School Board Policy
 Committee Meeting**
 Time: 6:30 p.m.
 Location: High School D205

**School Board Discussion
 Meeting**
 Time: 7:30 p.m.
 Location: High School
 Room D205

APRIL 8
 PTA Meeting
 Lincoln Elementary
 School
 Time: 6:30 p.m.

APRIL 9
 PTA Meeting
 Jefferson Elementary
 School
 Time: 12 p.m.

APRIL 10
 PTA Meetings
 Mellon Middle School
 Executive Board Meeting
 (Virtual)
 Time: 9 a.m.

**Foster Elementary School
 Executive Meeting**
 Time: 1:30 p.m.

APRIL 13
 School Board Regular
 Meeting
 Time: 6:30 p.m.
 Location: High School D205

APRIL 14
 PTA Meetings
 Howe Elementary
 Working Session
 Washington Elementary
 School
 Time: Board 6:30 p.m.
 Time: General: 7 p.m.

APRIL 16
 PTA Meeting
 Foster Elementary School
 Time: 9:30 a.m.

APRIL 17
 PTA Meeting
 Jefferson Middle School
 Time: 8:45 a.m.

APRIL 21
 PTA Meeting
 Hoover Elementary
 School
 Time: 6 p.m.

APRIL 24
 PTA Meeting
 Mellon Middle School
 Time: 9 a.m.

News Briefs

Registration open for 30th Annual Martha's Run in Mt. Lebanon

Registration is now open for the 30th annual Martha's Run, set for Saturday, April 11, at Mt. Lebanon Stadium. The event is organized by The Martha Fund, a nonprofit created to honor the memory of slain FBI Special Agent Martha Dixon. Founded in 1995 by Dixon's family and friends, the organization supports playground construction and renovation projects throughout the Pittsburgh region.

Martha's Run serves as the group's primary fundraiser and features several events for participants of all ages, including a 10K run, a 2-mile fun run, a 1-mile memorial walk and a children's race.

All races begin at 9 a.m., with the kids race scheduled for 9:15 a.m. Entry fees range from \$15 to \$45 depending on the event and registration date.

Since its founding, The Martha Fund has provided grants for numerous playground projects and helped create Martha's Playground in Mt. Lebanon Park, which opened in 2007.

To register or learn more, visit themarthafund.org.

Authors of Snoopers & Sneakers to visit Mt. Lebanon Library

Middle grade authors Cristina Rouvalis and Lydia Wayman will visit the Mt. Lebanon Public Library at 4 p.m. Monday, April 20, as part of an Autism Awareness Month event.

The program will feature a short reading from their award-winning youth mystery *Snoopers & Sneakers*, along with a discussion about autism and writing and time for audience questions. Special guest Goose, a therapy cat, will also attend.

The sensory-friendly event is open to all ages. Signed copies of the book will be available for purchase.

Snoopers & Sneakers, about a cat-loving autistic girl and a former social butterfly who team up to solve a crime after their favorite teacher is arrested, has won gold medals in the Moonbeam and Readers' Favorite contests for youth mysteries. ♥



Goose, a therapy cat, will make a special appearance at 4 p.m. April 20 at the Mt. Lebanon Public Library alongside the authors of *Snoopers and Sneakers*. (Photo provided)

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Good in the LEBOhood

By Jennifer Ganser

I may get the byline for this column, but there are a few dozen folks with whom I happily share writing credit this month. If you were at Rollier's or Commonwealth Press and took a moment to place a note in one of our Kindness Crates, I'm talking to you. (Well ... writing to you.)

As a refresher, this column serves as a collection of all the good that's going on in Mt. Lebanon — a spot for your stories of hope, inspiration and kindness. Our Kindness Crates are one way we're gathering these stories. The instructions at each crate station are simple: "Using the paper provided, please share who or what you're grateful for today, an act of kindness someone did for you, or a moment that brought you hope."

And, my Lebo neighbors, you have shown up.

Within days of our Kindness Crates making their debuts at Rollier's and Commonwealth Press, your notes began pouring in.

I must tell you I was smiling like a butcher's dog each time I checked the crates, seeing how many notes had been added since the last time I stopped by. As I unfolded each colorful note, I pictured the moments that guided that paper to my hands: the author stopping at the Kindness Crate, reading the instructions, either unsure what — if anything — to write or absolutely

certain of what to say, then choosing to put pen to paper to share part of their story with all of us.

To say "thank you" in written form with a full and grateful heart.

So please read on to find out what our neighbors are grateful for right now.

From Rollier's ...

- I'm a mom of three adult children, and I was blown away by a random act of kindness by a young lady I later learned is a high school senior. We had never met before, but while passing at my place of work I told her she smelled nice and asked what perfume she was wearing. She couldn't remember the name but said she would let me know.

A week later, she came back and handed me a handwritten card, a chocolate bar and a bottle of that perfume! I was so touched that I still can't believe she did that for me. What an amazing and kindhearted young lady who is surely making this world a better place. To Vanessa: Keep smiling. You are special!

- People being kind and caring — Vivian, age 6
- I am grateful for my home, mom and sisters. — Marley
- Ballet class with my friends
- My cousins
- Someone held a door for me
- I am grateful for Roblox and my iPad

- I'm grateful for my wonderful lil' sistah!

- I'm grateful for my teachers

- I am thankful for my community. — Corbie

- I'm grateful for who held my hand on The Phantom

- I am grateful to have a friend like Cole K.

- I am very grateful for my girlfriend, Talia, who is my bestest friend and the light of my life!

- Grateful for my dad, Richard Sovchen. He is 83 years old. He moved me to Lebo when I was 1 so I could attend a better school system. He rocks!

- My friends who drop everything to walk and talk

- I'm grateful for all the opportunities I have

- I saw my old friend Margaret H. today. What a blessing!

- I am grateful for all my beautiful friends and family who bless my life every single day

- My mom helped take my children to their sports. It takes a village!

- Family, friends and thoughtful neighbors

- I am grateful for waking up today — my body works and the sun is shining!

- Dee: always patient, kind and helpful

- I'm so incredibly grateful for my employers. They have been nothing but kind, supportive and understanding since I started working here — especially during a time of need. — Kristol H.



Amelia and Eden Rugh with the Kindness Crate at their place of business - Commonwealth Press. (Photo provided).

- The monks who are walking for peace have brought enlightenment. Thankful.

- I am grateful to be celebrating 45 years of marriage to my best friend — especially because it's Valentine's Day!

- My dog Petey. — Lori Pratt

- I'm very grateful for my dog, who keeps me company and knows me best

- Thankful that there are \$1 dog food cans I can donate to the Humane Society

- My pup meeting dog friends at Rollier's!

From Commonwealth Press ...

- I really enjoy being with my grandma when she comes over. — Alma, age 5

- I am grateful for the support I have from friends and family. Also, having reasons to smile — even little things — makes me grateful for the life I have

and the people in it.

- My cousin Galin gave me a piggyback ride

- My mom bought me a shirt

- Thank goodness for Dan and Shannon Rugh of Commonwealth Press for supporting rugby in the area and for the countless hours they spend helping teach kids the game

- I'm grateful for the people in my life and their ability to adapt and help me while I navigate hard changes. I don't know where I'd be without them, and sometimes I don't know how they do it. I'm lucky.

- (To Commonwealth Press) Love your store. Love your clothes. But I have nothing I love most! Love, Olive

- (From a family of four) Today we are grateful for ... Cohen: the beautiful weather

- Sutton: time with my family
- Sloane: a fun walk

Continued on page 5



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Good in the LEBOhood *Continued from page 4*

Kaitlyn: Lebo's walkability
• I'm grateful for my wife, Shannon, and my two girls, Eden and Amelia — for lots of reasons.

And if I may add my own note here: I'm grateful for all of yinz, who make Lebo one wonderful place to live.

You'll find our Kindness Crates at Rollier's, Com-

monwealth Press, Lebo Subs, Salon Vivace and Babb Orthodontics. Just stop in and they'll point you in the right direction.

You can also email me directly at yinzaregood@gmail.com.

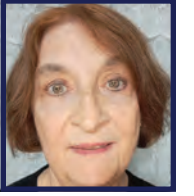
To learn more about my "good news" podcast, visit www.yinzaregood.com. ♥

STREET BEAT

Now that winter is coming to an end, do you have any special plans for spring?

I don't have any plans to leave Mt. Lebanon. I will just admire the colorful flowers, trees, and shrubs in our beautiful neighborhoods.

— George Ann B., Sage Dr.

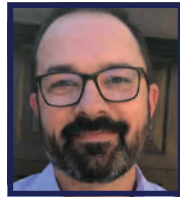
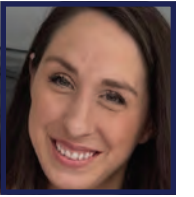


I'm going to try to figure out how to stop my grass and hedges from growing.

— Bill R., Valley Park Dr.

Our family is really looking forward to St. Bernard's Good Friday procession on Washington Road. Easter egg hunts, and walking uptown to Grandpa Joe's with friends.

— Catherine N., Rock Haven Ln.



Yes, to get a 6 month vacation twice a year!

— Dennis S., Orchard Dr.

Vacation where I don't have to wear gloves, hat, and a winter coat.

— H. Miser, Florida place




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Guarding the Crosswalk — and the Community

Linda and Steve Peterson nearing 25 years helping keep Mt. Lebanon students safe *By Stacey Reibach*

In 1977, Linda and Steve Peterson moved to Mt. Lebanon shortly after getting married. In 2001, after retiring from their jobs at Bell Atlantic (now Verizon), they decided they wanted to find a job that wouldn't take up their entire day. Both were caregivers for their mothers at the time.

They were hired as substitute guards, filling in when a regular guard was on vacation or out sick. In 2014, they became regular guards with permanent posts. There is only one crossing guard, Joan, who has served longer than Linda and Steve.

Both say they enjoy being outside and have never found the conditions to be a challenge. They note that the municipality equips them with excellent gear to keep them warm and dry. The Petersons say the job "definitely gave us another purpose and self-worth."

While serving as substitute guards, they worked at all 41 posts around town and found it rewarding to

get to know all the schools in Mt. Lebanon.

When asked what their favorite part of the job is, Linda replied, "It gets us up and out the door every day for a good purpose. The kids are our favorite part, though. Technology is such a big part of everyday living. It is refreshing to see kids are still kids ... they really have not changed."

The Petersons say the hardest part of the job is trying to stay one step ahead of drivers who are often on their phones, speeding or running red lights.

Steve recalled a time when a vehicle came speeding up Segar Road, ran the red light at Bower Hill Road, went up over the sidewalk at Steve's post — opposite the St. Clair ER entrance — and ended up in the yard of the corner house where Greenhurst Road meets Bower Hill. Had children been present at the time, the situation could have been much worse.

Linda said she recently had three of "her kids" move away and found that difficult.



Steve and Linda Peterson ready to serve and protect. (Photo provided).

"When I started crossing these three, they were quite bashful, and I took baby steps speaking with them to get them to talk with me until they eventually initiated the conversation," she said. "This made me feel really

special and proud, as I hope it lifted their self-esteem."

Both Steve and Linda train and evaluate new guards. Their best advice for trainees is to "own your post — the crosswalks are yours for those 2.5 or four

hours a day. Stand tall with the sign up high, be seen, and let motorists and kids know your intentions."

Asked what is needed to make the experience positive for both the guard and the students, Linda and Steve said punctuality, kindness, pride in the job, showing respect to everyone, common sense and assertiveness are keys to success.

Based on those standards, Linda and Steve have had a wonderfully successful career serving Mt. Lebanon in their roles as crossing guards.

Residents interested in learning more about becoming a crossing guard can contact Sharon Kroner, school guard supervisor, at 412-343-4540 or skroner@mtlebanon.org. Applications can also be downloaded at mtlebanon.org.

The starting pay rate for crossing guards is \$17.60 per hour, plus \$5 per day for travel. Hours of service vary depending on location, and some posts include a lunchtime shift. ♥



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Historical Society Launches Partnership to Preserve Family Histories

Digitization company Memory Lane Media opens Allegheny County drop-off site in Mt. Lebanon
By Sarah Core

Tucked away in attics and basements across Mt. Lebanon are home movies and photo albums filled with decades of family and local history just waiting to be rediscovered. A new partnership between the Historical Society of Mount Lebanon and a local digitization company is making it easier for residents to preserve those memories.

"The stars really just aligned," said Jenny Wood, vice president of the historical society.

Looking for help digitizing old football videos for an upcoming April exhibit, the historical society got in touch with Dan and Brittany Fleming, Ph.D., the co-owners of Memory Lane Media in Indiana, Pa. That is when they learned the couple was looking to expand their business into the Pittsburgh area.

Wood said Memory Lane Media provides a high level of personal care when preserving priceless memories. The historical society wanted to ensure it was partnering with a trustworthy company that community members would feel comfortable working with.

"They are a family-owned business, and they really understand how important this is to people," Wood said. "They understand the emotional attachment."

Memory Lane Media is also looking forward to the

new partnership with the historical society.

"The people talk the language of history here," Dan Fleming said. "They understand the one-of-a-kind nature of the things we are receiving."

It was not a very "scientific process" in choosing the municipality, Fleming said. Brittany's sister and brother-in-law, James and Alexis Ellermeyer, recently moved to Mt. Lebanon. While visiting them, "we fell in love with the community," Fleming said. "We could feel that it's a very family-oriented area."

"[We] shared with Jenny that we were looking for something down in the Pittsburgh area, and it made perfect sense for the location," he said.

Memory Lane Media got its start out of necessity. In 2016, Dan, then working in sales, and Brittany, a professor of digital media at Slippery Rock University, wanted to digitize family videos for their upcoming wedding reception. But they could not find a nearby business able to accommodate their needs.

"Brittany said, 'You're not mailing out our stuff. What if they get lost? What are we going to do?'" Dan said with a laugh.

Uncomfortable with the idea of sending their family memories across the country, Dan went to Walmart, bought some basic equipment and

set up shop in their spare bedroom. After their wedding, they started helping friends and family digitize their family memories as well.

"We could tell what we were doing meant something to people," Dan said. "When you are handing over one-of-a-kind memories, you want to know there is a person on the other end of it."

With the addition of the historical society, Memory Lane Media now has five staffed drop-off locations. Mt. Lebanon is the only Allegheny County satellite location serving the Pittsburgh area.

"We field a lot of requests for this type of digitization service," Wood said.

Memory Lane Media can digitize a wide array of video formats, including 8mm, 16mm and Super 8 reels, as well as VHS, VHS-C, Betamax, MiniDV, Video8, Hi8 and old DVDs. The company also processes photographs, negatives and 35mm slides, along with audio cassettes, reel-to-reel audio and LP records.

Customers can choose multiple options for accessing their newly digitized files, including flash drives, DVD or Blu-ray discs, and extended cloud storage with unlimited shares and downloads. One flash drive can hold hundreds of VHS tapes while maintaining full-quality preservation.

"You can watch home movies on a cruise ship in



A new partnership between the Mt. Lebanon Historical Society and Memory Lane Media will allow residents to digitize old photos, home movies and other family memories for preservation. (Photo provided)

the middle of the ocean," Dan said, explaining how these digitized files are often prepared for birthdays, weddings, funerals and family reunions. "You can put your family's entire story on one USB."

Customers work directly with Memory Lane Media to discuss their specific needs and costs. They can then bring their materials to the historical society, where volunteers will help them fill out a form, label everything and place the items in a secure box for Memory Lane Media to pick up. In-person meetings with Memory Lane Media are also available by appointment.

The company also offers restoration services for damaged materials, including broken tape cases,

low-quality audio and film damage from water, mold or mildew — services many companies are unwilling to provide.

"That's something, with time, that is becoming more and more necessary," Dan said. "A lot of companies won't deal with that and will just throw it away. We'll clean it off and care for it."

Even for those not yet considering digitizing their materials, Dan recommends moving important family memories out of attics and basements to prevent further deterioration. He emphasized that storing them in a temperature-controlled environment can help preserve them and slow the aging process.

To learn more, visit memorylanemedia.online. ♥

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Where Creativity Takes Center Court

Thirty-eight AP Art students transform personal ideas into 20-piece exhibits for Mt. Lebanon High School's annual art showcase By Lindi Pastorius

To the left of an oversized garage door, floor-to-ceiling windows stretch across the lower level of her classroom. Looking down from the top of an industrial staircase, Jennifer Rodriguez checks in with the students sitting at a long table by the window.

"Do you guys need the lights on?" Rodriguez asks.

They shake their heads no as the lights flicker on and off while another student adjusts a projection of her artwork onto a canvas that stretches the height of the wall.

What seems like a normal day in Jennifer Rodriguez's AP art class at Mt. Lebanon High School is busier than usual as students prepare for the upcoming art show. In a little more than a month, the 38 students in this year's AP cohort will showcase their 20-piece exhibits to the community.

Working within requirements set by the College Board, students complete a Sustained Investigation centered on the work in their exhibits.

"Each student gets to design the theme they want to work in," Rodriguez said. "These students have asked a question, and their work has answered that question 20 different times."

Rodriguez, a former art student at the high school who graduated in 1997, knows well what it takes to make the show a success. She has helped evolve the event from a small-scale

exhibition to an online show during COVID-19 and now to a community event that hosted more than 1,000 people last year. Rodriguez and her students hope this year will be the most successful yet.

"It is our most diverse show to date. It will showcase a myriad of styles and approaches to creative problems," Rodriguez said. "We have everything from 3D portfolios with ceramics to 2D portfolios, even one that showcases bleach painting on black fabric — along with digital art, hand-rendering and paintings of all sizes."

That diversity is reflected in AP art student Talia Pizzuti's exhibit.

"I like to make things that I can use," Pizzuti said. "I have been sewing since I was little. I love doing things with clay and crocheting. I love to make physical things. Painting is the odd one out in my collection."

Ceramics are also featured in her portfolio, but the standout pieces in her exhibit use collage to create landscapes tied to a nature-based theme.

"I take aspects of nature and bring them to life, give them emotions and put those emotions on the canvas," Pizzuti said.

In senior Anja Williams' exhibit, themed "Broadening the Definition of Decomposition," a featured piece explores the idea of molting —



Anja Williams
(Photo provided)

a concept she feels reflects her current stage of life.

"I am in a time of abrupt change with going to art school next year," Williams said. "So in my head this piece is a molting of my old self and going into a new era of my life."

Williams uses art as a tool to capture personal growth and artistic development.

"It tracks how I have grown over the years," she said. "It's like my own version of scrapbooking or keeping a journal."

More than 200 students will pass through Rodriguez's classroom this year, and many leave with the same feeling as senior Ava Heidenreich — welcomed and prepared for the future.

"Art has helped me with time management," Heidenreich said. "The number of projects we do each year has also helped me develop my problem-solving skills."

All three students have completed two years in AP



Talia Pizzuti
(Photo provided)

Art as juniors and seniors. This exhibition will be the second and final time they show their work during high school, and Heidenreich said she is looking forward to it.

"I love how special the atmosphere is," she said. "All the art students have worked so hard leading up to the day, and it is great to see how proud everyone is of their work."

Both Heidenreich and Williams say Rodriguez's encouragement — along with the pace of the AP Art course — has helped them become comfortable with imperfections in the creative process and adapt to the fast pace required to prepare their exhibits.

"I am not used to churning out pieces fast," Williams said. "This process made it more rhythmic."

For Rodriguez, the art show centers on her students and their success, but it also reflects a connection



Ava Heidenreich
(Photo provided)

between the local community and art.

"Being able to articulate your process, your style, your artistic voice — it's not just a good life skill," Rodriguez said. "It builds connections."

She added that the show also provides a window into how young artists see the world.

"It helps inform Mt. Lebanon about what the current art trends are with our youth," Rodriguez said, "and helps our youth become informed by the community around them."

The Mt. Lebanon High School Annual Art Show will take place April 24 from 7 to 9 p.m. in Center Court at the high school. The event will feature live music from the high school jazz band, framed art for sale and three floors of displayed artwork, including pieces from students across all high school art classes and the AP Art students' exhibits. ♥

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LET'S HAVE A TOAST FOR SPRING



700 Washington Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15228



HVAC expert urges spring maintenance for home systems

Mt. Lebanon contractor offers tips homeowners can handle — and when to call a pro

By Rich Shrum

The winter of our discontent has passed. The 36-inch snowdrifts and frigid temperatures are now a bitter memory. Spring has nearly sprung, crocuses are popping up and summer is ahead.

That means it is time for homeowners to start considering how to prepare their residences for warmer weather.

John Lugaila, owner of Mt. Lebanon-based MRT HVAC Contracting, has plenty of advice for consumers heading into more comfortable conditions. Chief among his guiding points is simple: "Make sure work is done by a professional."

But there is an important caveat.

"There are simple tasks a homeowner can do" to prepare for spring and summer — and later for fall preparation heading into winter, he said.

Lugaila has worked in the HVAC industry — heating, ventilation and air conditioning — for more than 30 years. He is a steamfitter with Union Local 449.

The Upper St. Clair resident founded MRT with his wife, Erin, in 2003. The company operates from 603 Washington Road in Mt. Lebanon, across from Rollier's Hardware, and maintains a ware-

house at 756 W. Liberty Ave. in Pittsburgh, across from North Star Chevrolet.

In a prepared statement, Lugaila said a home's heating and cooling system is critical to overall comfort and efficiency.

"Your home's heating and cooling system is one of the most important mechanical systems in your house," he said. "Proper seasonal maintenance helps your equipment operate efficiently, extend system life, lower energy bills and prevent unexpected breakdowns."

Homeowners, he acknowledged, can perform some simple maintenance tasks. However, many HVAC service procedures should always be performed by a trained professional because of high electrical voltage and pressurized refrigerant systems that can be dangerous to handle.

Lugaila said spring "is the ideal time to schedule professional maintenance on your air conditioning system before the summer heat arrives."

"These systems require professional tools and training," he said, adding that homeowners should always hire a licensed HVAC professional for this work.



John Lugaila (Photo provided)

Simple tasks homeowners can perform in the spring include:

- Replace or inspect the air filter regularly.
- Keep leaves, grass and debris away from the outdoor unit.
- Check thermostat operation and replace batteries if needed.

- Make sure vents and registers are open and unobstructed.
- Run the air conditioner early in the season to confirm proper operation.

The acronym MRT is a salute to the Lugaila children, using the first letters of their names: Mia, RJ and Taylor.

Lugaila is a lifelong Pittsburgh resident who grew up in Robinson Township and graduated from Montour High School.

He said his business was inspired in part by his father, who dreamed of owning a business before he died in 2017.

MRT specializes in residential HVAC installation, system replacement, service and new construction projects. The company serves customers in Mt. Lebanon and throughout Allegheny County, as well as consumers in Washington, Beaver and Butler counties.

According to Lugaila, MRT plans to expand service areas into Butler County and West Virginia in 2027.

He said MRT has built a five-star reputation across multiple platforms, including Google, Angie and Networkr, along with an A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau. ♥

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Grief Recovery Coaching Business Helps Community Navigate Loss

Local counselor offers Grief Recovery Method through virtual and in-person sessions

By Annabelle Thomas

Former grief and trauma counselor Kristin Darcy started her grief recovery business, Choose Connections Grief Recovery Coaching, last year and has since built a client base around Pittsburgh through both virtual and in-person sessions. She uses the Grief Recovery Method, an international grief recovery program that she advocates for personally.

Darcy promotes a nuanced and validating approach to grief. From personal experience, she understands that complex emotions often follow tragedy.

"I always knew the benefits of counseling," Darcy said. "But I didn't really understand that you can experience grief over so many things. For me ... nobody that I loved had died, but I was still grieving a loss of safety, a loss of trust and a loss of support."

After earning a master's

degree in social work, Darcy worked as a counselor for more than a decade before taking time off to care for her family. During this time, her son experienced a trauma that Darcy later realized was also causing her grief. She turned to the Grief Recovery Method, a step-by-step program that helped her acknowledge and heal from her family's past.

"It made such a difference in my life that I got certified," Darcy said.

The experience inspired her to help change the narrative around loss and encourage others to recognize that grief is often more complex than many people assume. Darcy now uses the Grief Recovery Method with her clients and advocates for the program's structured approach.

"It really validates the other kinds of losses that people can experience," Darcy said.

"I think that there is a need for that in our community."

The Grief Recovery Method is an international organization that describes itself as "the only evidence-based grief recovery program in the world." Its website offers opportunities to receive treatment or become certified in the method to help others. Darcy completed this certification following her positive experience as a client.

"This program is different because it's a specific, step-by-step plan that we take people through," Darcy said. "It's an action plan for healing from emotional loss."

Her business, designed to promote emotional healing and support, is not traditional therapy. Though she worked as a grief counselor for many years, Darcy explains that her recovery coaching follows a structured program rather than a general psychological service. Her website



Kristin Darcy
(Photo provided)

specifically invites people who have felt unsatisfied with typical therapy or counseling services to explore her approach.

Darcy offers a 20-minute free session for first-time clients on her website, along with four different programs with varying durations and purposes. These include one-on-one support, group sessions, a

pet-loss support program and an option designed to help adults learn how to best support their children.

"Your experience is your experience," Darcy said. "If you've had a significant emotional loss ... you are owed the same kind of support and validation regardless of whatever loss has occurred."

For more information on Choose Connections Grief Recovery Coaching, contact Kristin Darcy at info@chooseconnectionscoaching.com or 410-409-3116. To book a session, visit chooseconnectionscoaching.com.

"Everybody deserves to feel joyful," Darcy said. "Everyone deserves to not have to live with pain that keeps you stuck ... and that's what this program is designed to help you do. It's not moving on from your grief — it's helping you find true happiness again in life." ♥

Mt. Lebanon students tell stories of local allies standing up to antisemitism

High school journalists profile "Righteous Among the Neighbors" honorees for Holocaust Center program

By Abby Sohyda

It's easy to imagine courage as something distant or monumental — something preserved in books, monuments or on TV. But real courage can be found close to home, even in Pittsburgh.

Righteous Among the Neighbors, a program of the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh, recognizes non-Jewish community members who actively support the Jewish community and stand up against antisemitism. The program began in 2023 and has honored more than 40 people across the region.

Each honoree receives a profile published in the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle. Those stories are written by student journalists from Mt. Lebanon High School.

As student reporters, my peers and I are responsible for telling the stories of these local allies.

For Greta Stern, a 16-year-old junior participating in the program for the second year, that responsibility is both professional

and personal.

"I wanted to join Righteous to take my interest in journalism to the next level," Stern said. "It was something I considered as a possible career, so I wanted to step outside my comfort zone and try a more formal interview and story process. As a young Jewish teen, the goal of Righteous Among the Neighbors really spoke to me."

The process differs from typical high school journalism assignments. Students receive a list of nominees from the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh, volunteer to write a profile and are assigned an honoree.

They then conduct interviews over several weeks, speaking with both honorees and the people who nominated them to piece together stories that extend beyond the high school and Mt. Lebanon community.

"Writing a Righteous story was surprisingly easier than a normal piece for the

school paper," Stern said.

"Having a long conversation with the nominees and hearing their experiences made it easy to find an angle."

Each profile highlights efforts to build bridges across communities. Honorees come from different professional backgrounds — including law, leadership and mediation — but share a commitment to strengthening interfaith relationships and encouraging dialogue.

"This year, I loved my first interview with my nominee," Stern said. "I was amazed at her work and story. The way she talked about her journey and appreciation for Judaism really stood out to me."

The assignment also brings added responsibility. Writing about antisemitism requires careful attention to accurately represent each person's experiences.

"One part that was harder was the extra responsibility when writing about antisemitism," Stern said. "I didn't want to misrepresent any-



Mt. Lebanon High School student journalists who participated in the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh's "Righteous Among the Neighbors" program pose with adviser Dawn Davenport of the Mt. Lebanon English Department. Students wrote profiles of local honorees who have stood up against antisemitism and supported the Jewish community. Pictured, from left, are Abby Sohyda, senior; Dawn Davenport; Scarlett Sweeney, senior; Lauren Rossetti, senior; Greta Stern, junior; Emma Curren, junior; and Alyson Lushko, senior. (Photo by Melanie Wieland, courtesy of the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh)

thing said. But that pressure made it more gratifying to know my words could tell someone's story."

The program culminates each February with a recognition ceremony at the Jewish Community Center in Squirrel Hill. The event honors recipients, recognizes the student journalists and brings the community together in a shared moment of reflection and hope.

"As always, these articles give me so much happi-

ness," Stern said. "All the nominees are great role models for the person I'd love to be — caring, open and willing to stand up."

As Pittsburgh continues to confront prejudice and division, Righteous Among the Neighbors offers a counter-narrative — one rooted in compassion and courage.

"These nominees show the positivity and love they bring to others," Stern said. "It encourages me to always try to do the same." ♥



St. Clair Hospital's Urologic Group Now Offers Cutting-Edge Prostate Cancer Treatment

A recent addition to St. Clair Hospital's urology department is making "waves" and helping to save lives.

The Bower Hill Road hospital is now offering robotic focal high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) for patients living with prostate cancer. Dr. Kevin Bordeau, a urologic surgeon with St. Clair Medical Group, performed the first HIFU procedure in January using the Focal One platform technology. It has given physicians yet another tool in their toolbox to fight prostate cancer, according to Dr. Bordeau.

As imaging and medical technology have improved drastically over the years, it has become easier in many cases to detect prostate cancer earlier. Early detection allows doctors to start treating the cancer sooner, which lends itself to improved outcomes for patients. That is why the HIFU procedure is so exciting to Dr. Bordeau and others in the urology group.

"We have been increasingly finding a lot of these people who were kind of in this 'gray' zone between those who needed their prostate either removed or radiated, and those who could be watched and treated with active surveillance," Dr. Bordeau said. "That was the exciting part of HIFU, because it allows us to be able to offer something to people who were in that 'in-between' area. I sensed that in those patients there was a desire to do something about the cancer, especially those who were maybe just starting to have more aggressive disease, but you still didn't really want to put them through a major operation or radiation. We now have this HIFU procedure we can use in those cases."

The HIFU procedure is an outpatient surgery in which there are no cuts, incisions or radiation. A patient is placed under general anesthesia, and a probe is inserted that allows surgeons to precisely image and map out where in the prostate to treat. HIFU uses high-intensity ultrasound waves precisely focused on cancerous prostate tissue, creating localized heat that destroys targeted cells while preserving surrounding healthy tissue.

Focused ultrasound works similarly to sunlight passing through a magnifying glass, where rays are concentrated at a single point, causing a significant temperature rise around the focal point. The process takes about 1 hour and 30 minutes, Dr. Bordeau said.

Another aspect that makes HIFU potentially appealing to patients is that it may produce fewer side effects — such as incontinence and erectile dysfunction — compared

with other treatment options. If the procedure is performed, it also does not eliminate the possibility of surgery or radiation in the future if needed. Studies so far have shown comparable oncologic outcomes compared with other prostate cancer treatment methods, with low residual cancer following the HIFU procedure, Dr. Bordeau noted.

"I think HIFU is the future of prostate cancer treatment, because the imaging is only going to get better," Dr. Bordeau said. "And as we get better and know where the cancer is, we're going to be able to more accurately treat it within the prostate. What I'm seeing so far is that it's expanding the options for people with prostate cancer and not necessarily replacing something else. If you have cancer on both sides of the prostate where you can't go in and treat just a certain area and you'd have to treat the whole prostate, then surgery or radiation is still going to be the best option. But I would say our ability to know that is only going to get better as imaging continues to improve."

Dr. Bordeau also underscored the importance of people being screened for prostate cancer, as early detection can make treatments like HIFU extremely effective options.

"I think there's debate sometimes about whether people should be screened for prostate cancer," he said. "The earlier you find it, the more options you have. For people who are fearful about side effects like urinary control and erection problems, sometimes they will not get screened because they're apprehensive about the possibility of needing treatment and potentially losing those functions. It's important for people to know that we're working on treatments to try to make things less difficult for them and help them maintain their quality of life. But the cornerstone of that is making sure people get checked so we can find things early."

Visit stclair.org to learn more about the HIFU innovative prostate cancer treatment option at St. Clair Health. ♥



Dr. Kevin Bordeau
(Photo provided)





Outreach Teen & Family Services Names Barb Saunders Executive Director

By Eleazer Gorenstein

A long-standing Mt. Lebanon community resource is getting a fresh face in its leadership, though one familiar with its mission.

For more than 50 years, Uptown Mt. Lebanon-based Outreach Teen & Family Services has offered counseling and educational programs that are professional, nonjudgmental, confidential, and accessible, according to its website. The agency works to ensure local children, teens, and families have the resources they need to live healthy, fulfilling lives. Outreach operates on a fee-for-service basis but provides subsidies to ensure no one is turned away.

Barb Saunders, a member of Outreach's board since 2024, became executive director on March 16. Her career has focused entirely on mental health services, from intensive day treatment to overseeing school-based programs. She replaces Mary Birks, who retired last year after serving as executive director since 2014.

"Our goal is to provide affordable, accessible counseling to anyone in the community who needs it," Saunders said. "We strive to ensure no one is turned away. The warmth and dedication I've seen from staff and board members drew me to this position."

Saunders called Outreach a "hidden gem" and aims to increase its visibility. Outreach offers programs such as the Teens Tap In podcast and student assessments through the Rapid Adolescent Prevention Screening (RAAPS), which identifies at-risk students who could benefit from counseling. Additional training and workshops further support families and youth across the community.

Founded in Mt. Lebanon in 1974, Outreach originally focused on preventing juvenile delinquency and supporting teens at risk due to unsafe behaviors in local parks and schools. By the 1980s, it expanded to include caregivers, strengthening family communication and bonds.



Barb Saunders (Photo provided)

"It's important to impact not just youth but their environment—school, home, and community," Saunders said. "In 1981, Outreach became a private nonprofit, adding professional members to the board. Since then, the committed team has focused on strengthening the agency, fundraising, and increasing visibility."

In addition to its Uptown Mt. Lebanon office on Washington Road, Outreach has an office in Bethel Park and two counselors co-located in the Chartiers-Houston School District. Proceeds from the 2026 Annual Connections Gala, scheduled for May 8 at the Senator John Heinz History Center, will help continue subsidized counseling for families who might otherwise lack access to mental health services.

"With the positive and accepting culture at Outreach, we want to expand further into the community and schools," Saunders said. "The first step is conducting a needs assessment to ensure we're headed in the right direction. I'm proud to serve and look forward to expanding Outreach's impactful programs."

For more information, visit <https://outreachteen.org>. ♥

Outreach Gala "Up, Up and Away" Set for May 8

By Eleazer Gorenstein

Outreach Teen & Family Services will host its annual Connections Gala on Friday, May 8, at the Senator John Heinz History Center.

The gala raises crucial funds that help Outreach provide judgment-free mental health counseling to thousands of families across the South Hills. The agency removes many barriers to care, ensuring families have access to affordable counseling and programs regardless of their ability to pay, according to the organization's website.

The event has been a significant boost to Outreach's efforts over the years, according to gala co-chair Lauren Ganoë.

"Last year, the Connections Gala brought in more than \$125,000 for Outreach programs, which was amazing," Ganoë, who also serves on Outreach's board, said. "This event has continued to grow and become an incredible gathering of people passionate about mental health and wellness for youth and families in Southwest Pennsylvania. It's remarkable."

Ganoë said last year's gala drew about 235 attendees. She hopes to increase that number to nearly 300 at the 2026 event. The official name of this year's gala is "2026 Outreach Connections Gala – Up, Up and Away," reflecting Outreach's goal to inspire hope and elevate mental health support, she said.

The black-tie event introduced a big-ticket raffle last year for the first time, raising about \$30,000 for Outreach. The raffle returns this year, with a \$100 ticket giving supporters a chance to win one of three major prizes: a piece of jewelry, a vacation trip, or a premium bourbon collection.

Ganoë's co-chair is Tammy Eaton. The presenting sponsor is Southwood Children's Behavioral Healthcare. Adam Crowley, host of KDKA-FM (93.7 The Fan) "The Fan Morning Show," will emcee, and the keynote speaker will be Air Force Col. (Ret.) Tim Curry.

In recognition of their support for Outreach's mission, Patrick and Sara Cozzen will receive the 2026 Community Champion Award.

For more information, or to purchase tickets or sponsorships, visit <https://one.bidpal.net/upupandaway>. ♥

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Mt. Lebanon's Molly McKenna Named 'Miss Smiling Irish Eyes'

2023 Mt. Lebanon High School graduate honored by Pittsburgh Irish community, helps lead St. Patrick's Day Parade *By Lauren Cefalo-Moore*

"Miss Smiling Irish Eyes" is one of the highest honors awarded by the Pittsburgh Irish community. A tradition for more than 65 years, the title recognizes a young woman who exemplifies outstanding representation of the Irish in Pittsburgh through strong moral character, ethical ideals and poise.

This year, the honor was awarded to 21-year-old Molly McKenna of Arden Road. McKenna is a lifelong Irish dancer, dedicated volunteer and proud ambassador of Pittsburgh's Irish American community.

As Miss Smiling Irish Eyes, McKenna helped lead the 2026 Pittsburgh St. Patrick's Day Parade.

"I remember dancing in the parade and seeing the queen and her court and always looking up to them," McKenna said. "Being able to represent the Pittsburgh Irish community and all of my Irish ancestors who came to Pittsburgh years ago is really a dream come true for me."

McKenna first embraced her love for her Irish heritage at age 3, when her parents took her to the Pittsburgh Irish Festival. She remembers watching the Shovlin Academy Irish Dancers, moving her feet along with the music and telling her parents, "I want to do that!"

For more than 15 years, she performed with the Shovlin Academy at parades, festivals, senior centers and community events. McKenna has competed at the highest levels of Irish dance, including the Mid-Amer-



Mt. Lebanon graduate Molly McKenna, a junior at Saint Mary's College, helps lead the Pittsburgh St. Patrick's Day Parade as Miss Smiling Irish Eyes.

(Photo by Lauren Cefalo-Moore)

ica Oireachtas and the 2023 All Irelands in Killarney, Ireland.

McKenna is currently a junior at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, majoring in biology and chemistry while dancing with the Notre Dame Irish Dance Team.

Service has also played a major role in McKenna's life. She attended St. Bernard Catholic School and volunteered hundreds of hours through her parish community and youth group mission trips. She also helped teach Catholicism through the Adaptive Religious Education Program for children with special needs.

"Whether it's helping those in need or teaching CCD to some amazing kids, the most rewarding

part of volunteering through the church is helping others see God's love," McKenna said.

To further promote her heritage and faith, McKenna joined the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (LAOH), a Catholic Irish American fraternal organization whose mission is to promote Irish culture. She served as president of Junior Ladies LAOH Division 23 and is now working with national leadership to launch the first collegiate LAOH club at Saint Mary's College.

Her commitment to service has earned several honors, including the Medallion Ball Award and the Junior Women of Achievement Award.

McKenna plans to continue

expanding collegiate LAOH membership, compete with her céilí Irish dance team at Collegiate Nationals, pursue medical school and remain rooted in Pittsburgh — celebrating her heritage through dance, service and community leadership.

"I keep thinking to myself that this isn't just an accomplishment for me, but something my whole family, friends and community can be proud of," McKenna said.

There may be something in the water in Mt. Lebanon. The 2025 recipient of the honor was Melanie Grace Rayl, a 2022 Mt. Lebanon High School graduate.

Keep smiling, Molly and Melanie — you have certainly made the Mt. Lebanon Irish community proud. ♥



Making Lebo proud: The Mt. Lebanon Blue Devil Marching Band also performed at the 2026 Pittsburgh St. Patrick's Day Parade. (Photo by Lauren Cefalo-Moore)

Lebo Gift Gals *Your guide to gift giving*

Welcome to the first column of "Dear Gift Gals," similar to Dear Abby or Ask Ann Landers — but focused on thoughtful gifting and celebrating life's important moments.



After serving the Mt.

Lebanon community on Beverly Road for four years, we've heard many of the same gifting dilemmas repeatedly. We've helped customers choose the perfect gifts for hostesses, new babies, grieving friends, and other special occasions.

In this column, we'll tackle those kinds of questions and many more.

Dinner Party Hostess Gifts

Q: I've been invited to a special dinner party. I asked the hostess what I could bring, and she replied, 'Just come — no need to bring a thing!' Should I still bring something when she told me not to?

A: If you've ever hosted an event at your home, you know it takes extra effort. When a hostess says "just come," what she usually means is that the meal is already planned and there's no need to contribute to the menu.

Instead, think of bringing a small thank you gift to show appreciation for the hospitality.

Many guests default to a bottle of wine or

fresh flowers. While those are perfectly acceptable, they can sometimes create small dilemmas for the host. A bottle of wine may raise the question of whether the guest expects it to be served that evening, while flowers may

require the host to find a vase and arrange them while juggling other hosting duties.

A great starting point when choosing a gift is to think about what you know about the host. Consider the colors in their home, shared hobbies or interests, or even the theme of the dinner party.

Hostess Gift Ideas:

- A luxe candle
- A small seasonal pillow (these usually work even if they don't perfectly match décor)
- Clever cocktail napkins paired with a spreader and dip dish
- A small locally made charcuterie board
- A specialty treat or luxury item the host might not buy for themselves

We'd love for readers to be part of the conversation, so send your gifting questions or topic ideas to info@lebobeat.com. LEBO Gift Girls are Karin Smith and Jennifer Brandenstein, owners of Barefoot & Stitches on Beverly Road. ♥

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LEBO BEAT SPORTS

Mt. Lebanon lacrosse looks to continue dynasty

Seniors who have never lost a WPIAL final aim for fourth consecutive championship

By Scarlett Sweeney

After winning the WPIAL championship three years in a row, the Mt. Lebanon boys lacrosse team is determined to make it a four-peat, led by a group of seniors who have never lost in the championship.

In 2023, the Blue Devils beat Shady Side Academy 10-8 to capture back-to-back WPIAL Class 3A titles. In 2024, Mt. Lebanon defeated North Allegheny High School 15-10.

In the 2025 championship, Lebo trailed Shady Side Academy 10-7 in the fourth quarter before mounting a dramatic comeback. The Blue Devils scored five of the final six goals to erase the deficit and take a late lead. With just 32 seconds remaining, senior Max Prezioso scored the game-winning goal to secure a 12-11 victory and give Mt. Lebanon its third consecutive WPIAL championship.

Senior Max Prezioso is committed to playing Division I lacrosse at Robert Morris University. Last season, he was named a USA Lacrosse High School All-American and earned All-WPIAL honors.

While he described his recruitment process as long and difficult, Prezioso ultimately committed to RMU early in his senior year, where his brother, Luke Prezioso, is currently a sophomore on the lacrosse team.

"I decided to commit to RMU because I was excited to be able to play on the same team as my brother," Prezioso said. "They are also a competitive Division I team that is close to home."

During his senior season, Prezioso is excited to play alongside teammates he has been competing with since elementary school, all of whom share the goal of winning their fourth championship.

"My motivation for this season is winning the last three WPIAL championships in a row and wanting to finish this season on a high note like all the others," Prezioso said. "It will be the last time playing lacrosse with all my close friends that I've been playing with since elementary school."

Beyond another WPIAL championship, Prezioso also hopes the team can go undefeated in section play to win the section title and potentially compete for a state championship.

Senior defender and 2025 all-section first-team honoree Benton Thompson agrees with Prezioso that Mt. Lebanon's winning culture is something he wants to continue during his senior season.

"I look at my senior season as an opportunity to improve the kids in the grades below me so the team is good next year," Thompson said. "We lost a lot of talent from last year, so competitive practices are a huge goal of mine for the team."

As a defender, Thompson also wants to prioritize helping younger defenders improve their game and build what he hopes will become "the best defense in the state."

"This year's team is made up of guys who have been around a winning culture for years, and now it's our time to add to that winning culture," Thompson said. "I've been playing with this group of guys for seven years now, so to cap off my career with a championship would be perfect."

While Prezioso's skills have had a major impact on Mt. Lebanon lacrosse over the past three years, the program itself has also left a lasting impression on him — one he will carry into his future at Robert Morris University and beyond.

"Lebo lacrosse has taught me to have fun in whatever I am doing,"



Senior Max Prezioso, USA Lacrosse High School All-American and earned All-WPIAL honors last year. (Photo provided)

Prezioso said. "I learned to take things seriously, but always have fun while doing them, and you'll end up succeeding if you do so."

Prezioso also hopes his legacy will continue after he graduates, both through the program's culture and the younger players who will carry the team forward.

"I hope I can leave a strong cultural impact here," Prezioso said. "I hope that more kids join the team, make new friends and that we remain a competitive lacrosse team."

Thompson shares a similar mindset when thinking about the impact he hopes to leave on the program.

"I hope that I leave my legacy by helping the younger defenders get better," Thompson said. "To make our defense the best in the state means helping them improve."

Looking back on his time with the program, Thompson encourages



Senior defender and 2025 all-section first-team honoree, Benton Thompson. (Photo provided)

younger players to appreciate their experience and enjoy every moment with their teammates.

"After graduation, I will remember all the fun times in the locker room and working hard with all of my friends," Thompson said. "Just play your style of lacrosse and, most importantly, have fun while you play and on the weekends."

Prezioso agrees with Thompson, while also emphasizing the importance of dedication and hard work outside of practice.

"It's very important to put work in during your off time if you want to see improvements," Prezioso said. "Just really enjoy the process, because before you know it, it will be over."

The team's first game is at North Allegheny on March 17. Players invite fans and spectators to come support the team throughout the season. ♥



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Lebo girls lacrosse chases third straight WPIAL title

Murdoch, Green headline Blue Devils team built on chemistry and comeback confidence

By Scarlett Sweeney

After winning the WPIAL championship the past two years, the Mt. Lebanon girls lacrosse team is hungry for a three-peat.

In the 2025 Class 3A WPIAL championship, the Blue Devils pulled off an impressive 15-14 underdog victory over Pine-Richland. Mt. Lebanon trailed 12-7 late in the third quarter before mounting a comeback to secure the win. Earlier in the regular season, Pine-Richland had defeated Mt. Lebanon 20-8, making the championship result even more remarkable.

In 2024, the Blue Devils also defeated Pine-Richland in the championship game, winning 16-11 behind Quinn Murdoch's five goals.

Four-year varsity starter and two-year captain, senior midfielder Quinn Murdoch is committed to play Division I lacrosse at the University of Cincinnati. In the 2025 season, Murdoch was named The Almanac Girls Lacrosse MVP and a USA Lacrosse High School All-American. She committed after visiting Cincinnati's campus, which she believed was "perfect" for her.

"When I walked onto the Cincy campus, I knew it was exactly where I needed to be," Murdoch said. "The most important thing for me about college is the people. Everyone on that campus respects one another, they all know one another, and you can just feel how special that is."

Murdoch described the recruiting process as very challenging because she had to start making decisions as a freshman about what she was looking for in a college and begin the recruitment process. However, she said it was also very rewarding.

"In the end, all of the hard work

and dedication are so worth it to know where I am going to school by the beginning of my junior year," Murdoch said. "Also, being the youngest of my siblings who have gone through this process created an amazing support system around me that helped me succeed."

Junior midfielder Cali Green is committed to play Division I lacrosse at Kent State University, which she describes as a very welcoming environment where she feels "at home." Now that she is committed, she hopes to worry less about perfection and focus more on growing as a player.

"I feel less pressure to be perfect in every single game, and I've worked on not letting my confidence drop if I don't perform as well as I hoped," Green said. "At the same time, I still hold myself to a high standard. Since I'm committed to playing in college, I know I need to continue performing at a high level and proving I'm capable of competing there."

During the 2025 season, Green was named to the All-WPIAL team and first-team all-section. This season, she hopes to become an All-American, improve her play and help her team win another WPIAL championship.

"I'm looking forward to enjoying this season with my teammates, especially because of how close we've become," Green said. "I know our shared trust and friendship will translate into great teamwork on the field."

Murdoch also spoke about the "unbreakable bond" the team has formed. She believes the love they share for one another is what has made the team so successful.

"We all just have so much love



Quinn Murdoch, a senior midfielder and four-year varsity starter, served as a two-year captain for the Mt. Lebanon girls lacrosse team.

and respect for one another," Murdoch said. "All drama is left off the field, and that is how we thrive with one another. We play for each other, our coaches and ourselves. We are all so competitive, even with one another at practice, which allows us to push each other while having a blast."

Green credits the upperclassmen for helping her become the lacrosse player she is today.

"Since my freshman year, I have had very dedicated upperclassmen who pushed me to be the best I could be and encouraged me to try new things," Green said. "Without their help and support, I wouldn't have made more friends or be the lacrosse player I am today."

Murdoch said her favorite career memory is last season's WPIAL playoff run. She believes being underdogs with little pressure allowed the team to play freely and ultimately win the championship.

During Murdoch's final year, she hopes to leave the Mt. Lebanon girls lacrosse program in better shape than she found it.



Mt. Lebanon girls lacrosse teammates Quinn Murdoch, left, and junior midfielder Cali Green pose during the season. (Photo provided)

"We definitely have grown into a more serious and stronger program, and I want people to continue that," Murdoch said. "Leading this team into the season, I want the team to continue to grow and compete. Take what we did last year and build off it."

For younger athletes going through the recruiting process, Green advises them to be selective and intentional.

"Reach out and email coaches more than you think you need to, and be intentional about the camps and events you choose to attend," Green said. "Go to showcases where there will be a strong college presence and where you know coaches are actively recruiting for your position. For example, I once went to a showcase where I performed really well, but it didn't lead to much because there were only a handful of coaches there, and they weren't very engaged. That experience taught me to be very selective and strategic about where I spend my time and energy." ♥

Former Lebo QB to discuss book on strike-era football season

Historical Society event coincides with opening of "Friday Night Lights" exhibit

The Historical Society of Mt. Lebanon will host former Mt. Lebanon High School quarterback and author Michael Eck for a discussion of his book "Strike Season" from 3 to 4:30 p.m. April 25 at the Mt. Lebanon History Center.

Eck's book recounts the extraordinary story of the 1979 Blue Devils football team, which continued its season after coaches walked out during a teachers' strike. With no coaching staff on the sidelines, Eck and three fellow captains stepped into leadership roles, organizing practices, creating game plans and guiding their teammates through each game while facing scrutiny from picketing teachers and members of the community.

For Eck, the season also carried personal stakes. He had long dreamed of playing football for

the University of Notre Dame and viewed the 1979 campaign as his final opportunity to win a championship and earn a scholarship. Determined not to let the strike derail their goals, Eck and his teammates took control of their own season, learning firsthand the challenges of leadership and teamwork.

"Strike Season" also explores the broader tensions surrounding the labor dispute, including the dilemmas faced by a veteran coach and a young teacher navigating union loyalties. The story highlights the resilience and maturity of teenage athletes thrust into unexpected responsibility.

Eck is also a founder of the non-profit STEER for Student Athletes, which provides mentorship to high school athletes facing challenging circumstances. Proceeds from the

book support the organization.

The author talk is part of the Historical Society's broader celebration of local football history. The organization will open its new exhibit, "Friday Night Lights," on April 23 at the Mt. Lebanon History Center, 794 Washington Road.

The exhibit explores more than a century of Mt. Lebanon football traditions and marching band history, highlighting community pride, memorable moments and the culture surrounding Friday night games. It is free and open to the public from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursdays and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays.

Tickets and more information about Eck's talk are available at lebohistory.org. ♥



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Rowing for Support: Lebo Crew Hosts Ergathon Fundraiser

Fundraiser helps provide boats, equipment and travel for student rowers

By Annabelle Thomas

The Lebo crew team is hosting an ergathon fundraising event Saturday, March 21, to raise money for its spring season and support the high school athletes. The event will be held in the Mt. Lebanon High School gymnasium from 3 to 6 p.m. and will feature raffles, a bake sale and an indoor rowing demonstration.

Since 1991, crew has been a thriving club sport in Mt. Lebanon and has built an impressive coaching staff over the years. Head coach and Lebo graduate DJ Vaglia is a strong supporter of the athletes, but funding is often difficult due to the sport's extensive equipment needs.

"Our equipment is not cheap," Vaglia said. "We don't require our kids to buy boats, but the team has to have them, and we don't get support from the school."

All fundraising from the event will go toward the team's supplies, helping support future successful seasons. The team has seen significant success in recent years, sending a boat to nationals for the first time in program history last year. The boat's rowers included Ben Sheppard, Owen Yeager, Bruno Obadic and Jude Kashlan, with

coxswain Celia Mitchell.

Much of the effort to raise money for the crew team comes from the parent crew board, led by parents such as Danielle Dunlap, the co-president. Dunlap said she was immediately moved by the team's sense of community and dedication when her daughter first joined. She hopes the fundraiser will not only bring in donations but also increase visibility for the sport and the team.

"We want to be able to keep the legacy of the team alive," Dunlap said. "The kids work so hard, and it really is a team sport. They really take care of each other."

The crew community also came together a few years ago after former student and rower Joey Talarico died, prompting significant fundraising efforts in his honor. The boat sent to nationals last year was nicknamed "The JET," after Joseph E. Talarico.

Rowing is far from the most convenient sport, and each crew member must dedicate many hours to practice during the season. Most students do not begin rowing until eighth or ninth grade, and through hard work and dedication they are able to advance

quickly. Practices themselves are extremely demanding, and each one takes place at a lake about an hour away by bus, making it a significant time commitment. As Vaglia sees it, rowing is "a really fantastic sport to teach discipline and help athletes appreciate working toward a long-term goal."

"Those who really want to succeed do well in the sport, not so much those who are naturally talented," Vaglia said. "You have to put in a lot of time and consistency to really see the benefits of your work."

Lebo crew has had many recent graduates move on to collegiate rowing teams, including Ben Sheppard at Temple University, Paige Engle at Duquesne University, Natalie McGee at Wellesley College, Bruno Obadic at the University of Pittsburgh, Owen Yeager at Stetson University and Scout Barber at the University of Tulsa. Current senior Alina Heine-man has committed to row at Washington University in St. Louis.

Dunlap hopes the event will bring more awareness to the dedication required of the team, especially given the demands of the sport. The event will highlight an ergathon, in



Fundraiser link still open after March 21 via the QR link.

which current crew members will demonstrate their endurance on indoor rowing machines.

"It's a lot of hard work," Dunlap said. "It'll be pouring rain ... and they have to rig and de-rig the boats ... and they'll have the biggest smiles on their faces. It's really amazing."

For more information about Mt. Lebanon rowing, the ergathon and how to support the team, visit www.mtlebanonrowing.org. ♥

Boys volleyball building momentum after program revival

Blue Devils look to build on playoff run three years after team's return *By Scarlett Sweeney*

The Mt. Lebanon boys volleyball team has won three WPIAL championships — in 1997, 1998 and 2001. However, after 2011, the program stopped operating. In 2022, the team was revived and has been rebuilding ever since. During the 2025 season, the newly revived team advanced to the WPIAL playoff quarterfinals.

Senior captain Cooper Wertz has been part of the team since his sophomore year. Since then, he has watched the program grow from winning only two sets all season to going 14-2 and becoming section champions the following year.

"The sense of family that the team has provided has also grown," Wertz said. "Team dinners, meetings, tournaments and bus rides have provided that connection that helps us on and off the court."

Wertz is committed to play college volleyball at Washington & Jefferson College.

"I knew I wanted to play volleyball in college; it was just a matter of which school was the right fit for me," Wertz said. "As soon as I visited the campus and met the kids I would be playing with, I wanted to go there."

During his senior season, Wertz believes it is time to step into a leadership role and set an example for his teammates. Through his leadership, he hopes to show that no matter how

long someone has been playing, their work ethic has the biggest impact on their success.

Junior Sam Shannon-Spector has been a member of the varsity team since his freshman year. That experience has allowed him to face strong competition early and develop more quickly. As a result, he has gained the confidence that he can match up with anyone across the net.

In the future, Shannon-Spector is considering high-ranking Division III schools, with his main goal being to play for a competitive program while receiving the best education possible. For this season, however, he describes the team as "hungry."

"That sums up our mentality," Shannon-Spector said. "We want to beat every team we see, and we want it to be known that we are right back where we were last year. For us, every point counts, no matter where we are or who we're playing."

Shannon-Spector believes this mentality has already been evident during the team's first few practices. He also hopes to make a name for himself this season.

"I want teams in the WPIAL to know who I am, so when they are going up against Lebo, they make a game plan for me," Shannon-Spector said. "I want to be able to impact each game this season and be a

pivotal part of our success. I want to help push this team back to WPIALs, where I know we can make a run."

Since his freshman year, Shannon-Spector says his mindset has evolved as he has grown into a key contributor for the team.

"In my freshman year and most of my sophomore year, my job on the court was to be reliable, stay up to the standard of varsity WPIAL volleyball and not be a liability," Shannon-Spector said. "It used to be about doing my job and trying to play up to these players. Now I'm more confident in myself, and I know I need to perform for my team. This year I've set a higher standard for myself. I'm trying to minimize mistakes and be an anchor for this team."

Wertz shares a similar mindset when it comes to this year's team and hopes to help the group build on last season's success.

"We set a very high bar last year, so being able to win games and make it further in the playoffs would be my goal," Wertz said. "As a team, we are just trying to improve every day. We lost a lot of key pieces last year, and filling those spots is going to be tough, but we understand that we all have to work together to hopefully come out with a similar outcome this year."

Beyond high school, Wertz plans to carry the lessons he learned from

Lebo volleyball into his future, both in college volleyball and in life.

"Lebo volleyball has taught me that it's OK to be outside your comfort zone," Wertz said. "Doing things that may or may not have a big impact on a game can put a lot of pressure on you. Having that support system around you helps you understand that it's OK to make mistakes."

Shannon-Spector credits Wertz and other seniors, as well as upperclassmen from previous years, for helping him improve his mechanics and develop as a player. He says they were a major reason he stuck with volleyball and hopes to inspire underclassmen the same way he was inspired.

"I hope to show an example to the underclassmen of a different level of volleyball," Shannon-Spector said. "My goal is for the underclassmen right now to be better than I am in their junior year and senior year. I want them to be the best they can be and reach their full potential."

For underclassmen navigating the recruiting process and playing volleyball, Wertz offers this advice:

"Start early, focus on what you can do now, and the rest will follow," Wertz said. "No one becomes great in their first year. Stick with the sport, and skills and experience will come with time." ♥



Mt. Lebanon Grad Eli Heidenreich Stars in Breakout Season at Navy

Record performances and strong combine showing boost NFL draft hopes

By Makenna Anthos

A record-setting season at the U.S. Naval Academy has propelled Mt. Lebanon graduate Eli Heidenreich into the national spotlight — but for his parents, the success has been years in the making.

Heidenreich, 22, helped lead the Navy Midshipmen to 11 wins this past season, the program's highest total since 2014. The versatile offensive player emerged as one of the team's top playmakers while rewriting parts of Navy's record book.

But Tara and David Heidenreich say their son's rise from high school standout to college star was built on years of work long before the highlights and statistics.

"People see the numbers now — the wins, the yards, the highlights," Tara Heidenreich said. "But it's the years when nobody was watching and how hard Eli worked then. That's what we're most proud of."

One of the most meaningful moments for the family came during Heidenreich's senior year at Mt. Lebanon High School, when he helped lead the Blue Devils to a state championship in 2021 alongside his younger brother, Ezra, and many longtime teammates.

"When the 2021 Mt. Lebanon team won the state championship, that was an amazing ride," David Heidenreich said. "Through his contributions that year,

Eli showed he might be a diamond in the rough."

Heidenreich was not heavily recruited coming out of high school, and his progress at Navy came gradually.

"I think he played with a chip on his shoulder when he arrived," his father said. "He worked for more than two years to prove himself and earn a starting role."

His perseverance paid off this past season.

During December's Army-Navy game, Heidenreich became one of Navy's top targets, catching six of the team's seven completed passes. With less than 10 minutes remaining in the fourth quarter, he caught a game-winning touchdown pass from the 8-yard line, helping secure the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy for the second straight year.

"I'll never forget the end of that game and the roar of the crowd," Tara Heidenreich said. "His persistence and all the preparation with his coaches and teammates came alive in that moment."

The victory helped Navy secure back-to-back 10-win seasons for the first time in program history.

Heidenreich also delivered one of the most productive seasons in Navy football history. He became just the second Football Bowl Subdivision player since 1956 to rush for more than 475 yards while also recording more



David, Eli, and Tara Heidenreich (All photos provided)

than 925 receiving yards in the same season.

By the end of the year, he had set a single-season school record with 941 receiving yards and finished his career with 1,994 receiving yards — the most in Navy history. His 109 career receptions rank second all-time for the program.

For his parents, those numbers reflect years of dedication behind the scenes.

"I think about him getting up early for drills with his Navy teammate and best friend, Alex Tecza, or staying late practicing routes with his high school quarterback," David Heidenreich said. "Most of all, I remember telling him before every game since high school: 'Do what you do.' That's exactly what he's done."

Heidenreich's breakout season has also opened doors at the professional level.

In January, he partic-

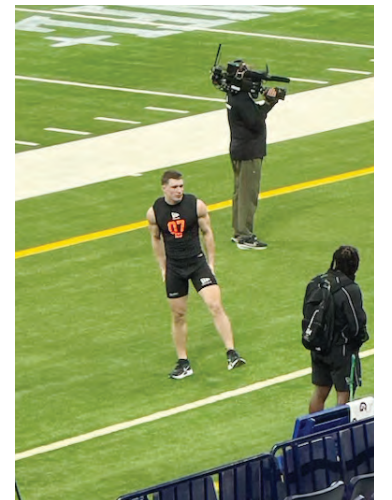
ipated in the East-West Shrine Bowl, the nation's longest-running college football all-star game, becoming the first non-quarterback Navy player invited since 2012. He served as a captain for the East team.

Soon after, he received an invitation to the NFL Scouting Combine in Indianapolis, held Feb. 26 through March 1. At the event, the 6-foot, 198-pound running back recorded a 4.44-second 40-yard dash — among the 10 fastest times for running backs — along with a 35.5-inch vertical jump and a 10-foot broad jump.

Following the combine, some analysts began projecting Heidenreich as a potential third-round selection in the upcoming NFL Draft.

For his parents, the opportunity represents a full-circle moment.

"From a kid who was barely recruited out of high



Eli Heidenreich at the NFL Scouting Combine

school to having the chance to showcase his skills for the NFL — it's everything he's worked for," Tara Heidenreich said.

Despite the growing attention, they say their son remains focused on the same mindset that fueled his rise.

"He lives by the idea of not letting potential go unrealized," David Heidenreich said. "He approaches every opportunity the right way and gives his full effort."

Whether that path ultimately leads to the NFL or to military service, his parents say the values he has developed along the way matter most.

"I hope people see his story as more than just a football career," Tara Heidenreich said. "It's about striving for greatness and making the most of every opportunity — whether that's on the field or serving his country." ♥




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Lebo girls track eyes record-breaking spring

Bucknell commit Lily Cramer leads experienced squad *By Scarlett Sweeney*

Fresh off a WPIAL championship in the 4x400 relay, the Mt. Lebanon girls track team is carrying its winter momentum into the spring season with hopes of another record-breaking year.

Senior Lily Cramer, a Bucknell University track commit and two-sport standout in track and lacrosse, helped lead the relay team to the WPIAL title alongside Lucy Tang, Lauren Krebs and Selma Bajgoric.

Cramer competes in the 4x400 relay, 300-meter hurdles and 100-meter hurdles. In lacrosse, she earned first-team all-section honors in 2024 and was part of the WPIAL championship team. Balancing both sports in the same season requires strong time management.

"I have to really manage my time, which sometimes means getting up early and doing my homework before school," Cramer said. "I also prioritize sleep and healthy eating, while taking time on the weekends to recover. Mentally, I see playing two sports in the spring as a privilege, and I try not to take that opportunity for granted. Even though it can be challenging at times, I enjoy staying busy and competing in both sports. It pushes me to stay focused, work harder and appreciate the chance to be a part of two teams."

Cramer committed to running track at Bucknell during the winter track season. Her recruiting process included reaching out to coaches, visiting campuses and learning about different programs before deciding on the school that best fit her academically and athletically.

During her senior season, Cramer hopes to give everything she has one last time.

"My senior track season means giving everything I have one last time," Cramer said. "I plan on making the most of every meet, every race, every bus ride, and setting a good example for my younger teammates."

Junior Keira Kraemer has also been a key contributor to the Mt. Lebanon girls track team. She competes in the triple jump, long jump, high jump, 200 meters, 100 meters and 60-meter hurdles. Her primary event is the triple jump, where she holds an outdoor personal record of 37 feet, 11.75 inches.

This season, Kraemer hopes to surpass 40 feet in the triple jump, reach 19 feet in the long jump and continue improving across her events.

"My goals for this season are to continue improving in all my events and reach new personal bests," Kraemer said. "I also want to continue refining my technique and becoming more consistent in my performances. Beyond my own marks, one of my goals is to grow closer with my teammates and support everyone on the team to become better throughout the season."

Looking ahead, Kraemer hopes to compete in Division I track and field at the collegiate level while pursuing a major that excites her. She credits her teammates and coaches for pushing her to improve every day.

"My team pushes me to be better every day because we constantly support and encourage each other," Kraemer said. "Whether it's at meets or during tough workouts, everyone is always cheering each other on and pushing each other to improve. Our



Members of the Mt. Lebanon girls 4x400-meter WPIAL champion relay team — Carmel Guillen, Lucy Tang, Lauren Krebs and Lily Cramer. (Photo provided)

coaches also play a huge role by believing in us and challenging us to reach our full potential."

Cramer agrees that the team environment motivates her to become the best version of herself, especially as part of a championship relay group.

"Since freshman year, I've become more confident and learned how to handle the pressure in a more positive way," Cramer said. "I look at pressure as a privilege and think of all the hard work that has gotten me to that point, turning my nerves into confidence. Our ultimate goal is to peak in May, and while there will be personal records along the way, there will also be plateaus. I've been able to rely on my training and stay confident when things don't go as planned, and trusting my coaches has helped me through tough times."

Through Cramer's hard work, she has become a WPIAL champion in both track and lacrosse. She said those championships represent the dedication she and her teammates have shown over the past four years.

"Winning with my 4x400 relay team and the lacrosse team was really special because it wasn't just about the result — it was about the effort, the preparation and the teammates who helped make it happen," Cramer said.

Being part of a relay team also motivates Cramer each day because she knows her teammates are counting on her.

"I think it pushes me to work harder every day because I know other people are relying on me," she said.

Kraemer also focuses on mental preparation before competitions.

"I visualize myself executing the event successfully and repeating the movements in my head," Kraemer said. "I focus on staying confident and positive throughout the entire process. I also trust fully in God's plan for me and remind myself to believe in my abilities and the work I've put in."

Since her freshman year, Kraemer has learned that improvement doesn't always happen in a straight line. Consistency and discipline, she said, are what eventually lead to progress.

For younger athletes, Cramer advises staying dedicated and trusting the process.

"Every athlete has ups and downs and good races and bad, but dedication and persistence go a long way," Cramer said. "Show up every day, keep working hard, and focus on improving a little bit at a time." ♥

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High School Honors Winter Varsity Letter Winners

Student-athletes recognized for athletic achievement, academics, dedication, leadership, and school spirit

On March 5, Mt. Lebanon High School celebrated its winter 2025-26 varsity letter winners, recognizing the hard work, dedication and achievements of its student-athletes both on the field and in the classroom.

This season, 202 student athletes across three boys' teams and three girls' teams and four co-ed teams earned varsity letters. Eleven seniors reached a rare milestone by earning their fourth varsity

letter, marking years of consistent excellence. One student - Caleb Rapkin - earned his fifth varsity letter in Bocce.

Student-athletes are also recognized for their academic success through the Scholar-Athlete Awards and the Athletic Director's Team Award. Scholar-Athlete Award recipients are posted on the district website. Academic honors are recognized as follows:

- Mt. Lebanon Scholar-Athlete Award: 4.0 GPA

- Blue Devil Scholar-Athlete Award: 3.5-3.99 GPA

- Lebo Scholar-Athlete Award: 3.0-3.49 GPA

Winter sports academic awards are based on the first semester grades. The academic honors achieved by the student-athletes are next to their names below.

The Athletic Director's Team Award, presented to the team with the highest cumulative GPA, went to the boys swimming team.

The Honor the Game

Award was given to Adam Burich (Rifle) and Jaclyn Harpst (Cheerleading). This award is given to student-athletes who exemplify the highest standards of sportsmanship. The award reflects the ROOTS principles of positive play: respect for Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and Self. Each team nominated one player who best embodied these values throughout the season.

One male and one female athlete are selected from

all programs for the overall Honor the Game Award. Their names are added to a perpetual plaque displayed in the Hall of Champions. This year's winners are Kris Kambitsis (football) and Mollie Gill (field hockey).

Congratulations to all the student-athletes — and a heartfelt thank-you to the coaches whose leadership, encouragement and commitment help make each season meaningful and memorable. ♥

Boys' Basketball

Head Coach: Joe David
Assistant Coaches: Tyler Bluemling, George Elias, Derek Sellers, Milan Smiljanic

1st Year Letter Winners
Braylon Harris/Lebo
Michael Davenport-Thomas

2nd Year Letter Winner

Nikhil Cherukuvada/
Blue Devil
Diego Duran Chavarria
(Manager)
Max Hergenroeder/
Blue Devil

Ryan Kokot/ Mt. Lebanon
Maxton Siegel/ Blue Devil
Jacob Zaber/Lebo

3rd Year Letter Winner

Dane Barber/ Blue Devil
Carter Gould/ Blue Devil
Luis Hernandez (Manager)
Santino Fiumara/Lebo
Patrick Smith/ Blue Devil
Hoyt Toole (Manager)

4th Year Letter Winner

Liam Sheely/ Blue Devil

Girls' Basketball

Head Coach: Mark Walsh
Assistant Coaches: Anna Betz & Sue McDonald

1st Year Letter Winners

Grace Ayimbota (Manager)
Emily Cramer/Mt. Lebanon
Arabella McGonigle/Lebo
Laila Nicholson (Manager)/
Lebo
Liliana Samreny/Lebo
Chloe Shea/Lebo

2nd Year Letter Winner

Bailey Ridge (Manager)/
Blue Devil
Emily Smith/Blue Devil
Ann Tinnemeyer/
Mt. Lebanon

3rd Year Letter Winner

Anessa Donoghue/Lebo
Callahan Green/Blue Devil
Reese Hall/Lebo
Elizabeth Twyman/
Blue Devil

Bocce (Unified)

Head Coach: Tracy McGonigle

Assistant Coaches: Lily Dalzell, Max DeWit, Sheila Halter, Bob Schilken, Jack Sullivan

1st Year Letter Winners

Kate Davidson/Mt. Lebanon
Alexander Eberhart/
Mt. Lebanon

Michael Incorvati/
Mt. Lebanon
Grace Manning/Blue Devil
Maria McAuley/ Lebo
Grace Oliver

2nd Year Letter Winner

Tyler Colville
Katherine Guerrero
Colin Kramer/Blue Devil
Joseph Malone/Blue Devil
Samuel McAuley/
Mt. Lebanon
Annaliese Riesmeyer/Lebo
Madelaine Whalen/
Blue Devil

3rd Year Letter Winner

Haven Ruscitti/Lebo

4th Year Letter Winner

Aidan Hancock/Lebo
Maisie Thompson
Evin Williams

5th Year Letter Winner

Caleb Rapkin

Cheerleading

Head Coach: Tracy Green
Assistant Coaches:
Dani Molter & Emilee Green

1st Year Letter Winners

Camellia Bagay/ Blue Devil
Violet Birnbaum Mt. Lebanon
Lillian Brouse
Emma Cooley/Blue Devil
Amanda Machado/
Mt. Lebanon
Nora Lauth/Blue Devil
Reese Lockwich
Hayden Orelli/Lebo
Lillie Sellers/Blue Devil
Julia Reese Torrell/Blue Devil
Violet Weber/Blue Devil
Elizabeth Wolfson

2nd Year Letter Winner

Ellie Green
Samantha Green/
Mt. Lebanon
Mia Hupe
Dominique Moore/
Blue Devil
Hannah Paracca

3rd Year Letter Winner

Abigail Basista Blue Devil
Luca Bucek/ Blue Devil
Kaityn Gibson/Blue Devil
Jaclyn Harpst/Mt. Lebanon
Sofia Jahaj/Lebo
Mckenna Morgan/Blue Devil
Marygrace Romeo/
Blue Devil
Francesca Steiner/
Blue Devil

4th Year Letter Winner

Nina Crago/ Mt. Lebanon
Leena Leja/Blue Devil

Dance Team

Head Coaches: Anna Cannavo & Sarah Langguth

1st Year Letter Winners

Baylee Benzel/Mt. Lebanon
Jolene Breier/Mt. Lebanon
Delani Carr/Lebo
Aria Cornacchione/
Mt. Lebanon

Pyper Fleming/Blue Devil
Samantha Green/
Mt. Lebanon

Audrey Heim/Mt. Lebanon

Lillian Hepps/Blue Devil

Dylan Lawley/Blue Devil

Leena Leja/Blue Devil

Stella McBride/Lebo

Lorelei Nalitz/Lebo

Riley Oakes/Mt. Lebanon

Sophia Perricelli

Isabella Ritenour/Blue Devil

Ainsley Schmitt/
Mt. Lebanon

Emerson Smith/Blue Devil

Leah Sotsky/Blue Devil

Ice Hockey (Boys)

Head Coach: Jeremy Church

Assistant Coaches: David Hornack & Tony Attanucci

1st Year Letter Winners

Charles Bank/Mt. Lebanon
Cooper Church
Beau Conaway
Keller Dungan
Sean Hough
Joseph Jackovic
Tucker Klasnick
Henry Mitchell
William Norton
Samuel Shinn
Luke Sullivan
William Varholla/Lebo
Cooper Whalen
William White

2nd Year Letter Winner

Cameron Mayer/Blue Devil
Liam Powers/Lebo
Kyle Quigley/Blue Devil

3rd Year Letter Winner

Parker Arlet
Xavier Bias/Blue Devil
Pierce Conrardy/Blue Devil
Samuel Eberhart/
Mt. Lebanon
Benjamin Kurta/Lebo
Joshua Lehman/Lebo
Zachary Lynam
Graham Resler/Blue Devil
Nathan Tran
August Zentner/
Mt. Lebanon

Rifle

Head Coach: David Willard
Assistant Coach: Natalie Kukla

1st Year Letter Winners

Elliott Brehm/Mt. Lebanon
Jonathan Hak/Lebo
Samuel Kottler/Blue Devil
Millicent Kukla/Mt. Lebanon

2nd Year Letter Winner

Max Kaplan/Mt. Lebanon
Guilherme Kavati Maeta/
Blue Devil
Mia Nikolic

3rd Year Letter Winner

Adam Burich
Alexander Chandran/Lebo
Beyza Senol
Elise Stock/Blue Devil

Swimming & Diving

Head Coach: Tom Donati

Diving Coach: Kelly

Calvino

Assistant Coaches: Sophia Donati, Tom Fletcher, Jake Hoyson, Bill Kennedy, Aidan Kreiley, Kevin McLaughlin, Luke Modrak, Betsy Stilley

1st Year Letter Winners

Caroline Chiappetta
Autumn Grella
Marko Janjic
Meredith Lipinski/Blue Devil
Ethan Lopert
Rafael Labriola
Evgeni Matros
Mary Mooney
Alaina Raff
Finn Thompson/Blue Devil

2nd Year Letter Winner

Lee Campbell
William Coleman
Matthew Coleman
Gwyneth Davis
Jonah DelMonaco
Vincent Griffin
Lucy Hackworth/Blue Devil
Colleen Hart
Kim Ho/Blue Devil
Lucia Long
Clara Shellenberger
Catherine Thomas
Kaili Woodland/Lebo

3rd Year Letter Winner

Sarah Albu/Blue Devil
Matthew Burton/
Mt. Lebanon
Peter Goslin/Mt. Lebanon
Matthew Harrold/
Mt. Lebanon
Kathryn Hart/Blue Devil
Noah Loboda/Blue Devil
Blake Oakes/Blue Devil

Margaret Reinhart/
Blue Devil
Rinzen Sherpa
Anton Skorski/Blue Devil
Evelyn Smith/Blue Devil
Quinn Thompson/Blue Devil
Thomas Vilaradaga
Benjamin Watterson/
Blue Devil
Leah Werzyn/Blue Devil
Jerry Yu/Mt. Lebanon

4th Year Letter Winner

Lillyan Evan/Mt. Lebanon
William Thomas/
Mt. Lebanon
Michael Zhu/Mt. Lebanon

Boy's Wrestling

Head Coach: Tyler Daffinee
Assistant Coaches: Jack Hnath & Matt Patrick

1st Year Letter Winners

Jackson Bucek
Henry Clark/ Mt. Lebanon
Juan Gonzalez Hernandez
Abram Hipolito/ Mt. Lebanon
John Kail
Ewan Keplar/Lebo
Asher Lucas/ Mt. Lebanon
Gabriel Mago/ Mt. Lebanon
Monty Patriquin
Noah Street
Vincent Williams
Aiden York

2nd Year Letter Winner

Henry Battenfelder
Jonas Kubilius/ Mt. Lebanon
Liam Mooney
Keesler Simoneau

3rd Year Letter Winner

Carson Cannone/Lebo
Edward Ercegovic/Lebo
Benjamin Mares/Blue Devil
Zackery Pitassi/Lebo
Evan Sala/Lebo

4th Year Letter Winner

Cole Gibbons/Blue Devil

Girl's Wrestling

Head Coach: Amanda Lebec
Assistant Coach: Bob Jox

1st Year Letter Winners

Camilla Hathaway
Carly Jox/ Mt. Lebanon
Lillian Perri/Lebo
Isla Silva/ Mt. Lebanon

2nd Year Letter Winner

Anna Dwulit (manager)
Juliana Van Slyke/Lebo

3rd Year Letter Winner

Sophia Beanner/Blue Devil
Sophia Hathaway

4th Year Letter Winner

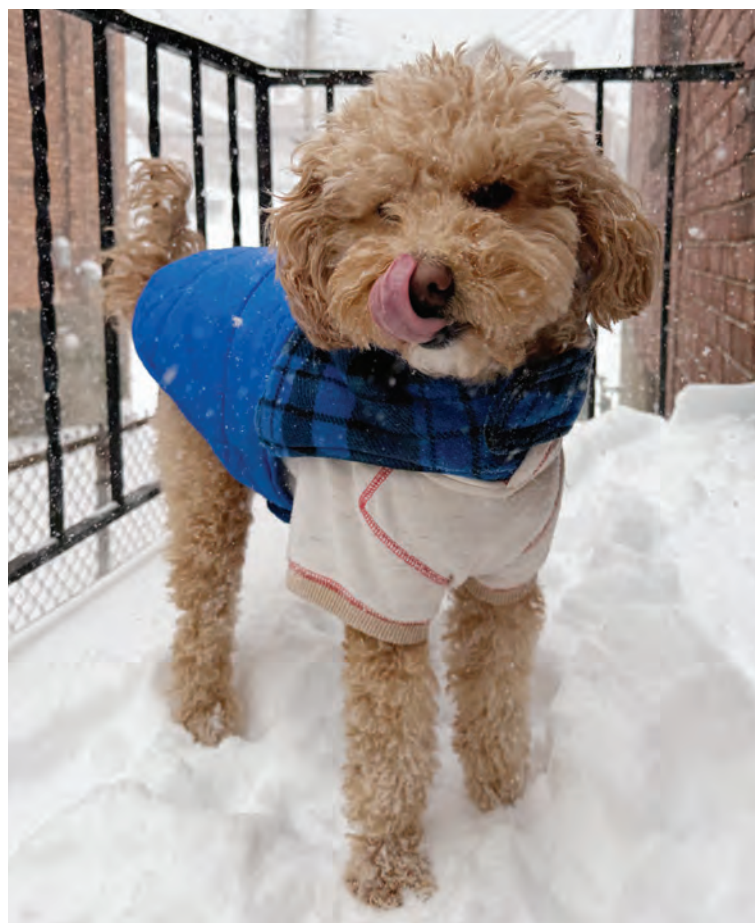
Paige Jox/ Mt. Lebanon



Bark Beat

Celebrating Mt. Lebanon's beloved dogs

Meet Charlie



Charlie is a mini golden doodle. (Photos provided)

Favorite humans?

Grandparents! Retirement=endless treats, walks, and most importantly, attention!

Favorite treat?

Dinner leftovers, especially steak. The stinkier, the better.

Favorite toy?

Lamb chop for every holiday... and post-run socks.

Favorite thing to do besides eat and sleep?

Trying out every business water bowl whilst on walks on Washington Road.

Why my humans think we are special?

The last 5 years with Charlie have added so much nature and outdoor time to our lives. We've met so many neighbors through walks, and he's helped us really integrate into the community.

Want your dog to appear in Bark Beat? Submit a photo(s) along with the answers to the questions above to info@lebobeat.com.



Lebo Financial Answers

Ask the Advisor

Readers with personal finance questions can now get expert insight through the Lebo Beat. John McGowan, financial advisor with Carson Wealth will answer select reader-submitted questions and provide professional guidance on topics such as investing, retirement, estate planning, taxes, and other financial matters. If you have a question you would like considered for a future column, email it to info@lebobeat.com. Here is the first answer to question submitted by a Lebo Beat reader.

Q: During the last election cycle, it was said that Social Security would no longer be taxed, is this true? Bill Fraser

A: Hi Bill, thank you for the question. We receive this inquiry from others like yourself quite often. There were a lot of statements promising social security would no longer be taxed, but unfortunately, that change has not transpired in the way most would have thought.

There are situations where social security is not taxable, and these rules have been in place for several years. As it currently stands for married couples filing jointly, if total household income is below \$32,000, Social Security benefits are not taxed. Once joint benefits rise above \$32,000, only 50% of those dollars are taxed until benefits exceed \$44,000. Once collective benefits exceed \$44,000, 85% of the benefits are subject to taxation.

There was a slight change with the new tax law (One Big Beautiful Bill) where everyone over the age of 65 receives an

additional deduction on their taxes, which is called the "Enhanced Senior Deduction". This provides an extra \$6,000 in deductions per person, which can help slightly offset the taxes for social security — but not entirely.

There is one caveat, however; as your income rises, this deduction decreases. For single filers, this deduction begins to phase out with modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) of \$75,000 and is then completely eliminated when MAGI rises above \$175,000. For joint filers, the phase out begins with a MAGI of \$150,000 and completely phases out at \$250,000.

As of today, this additional deduction is only available through 2028; at which time, the incoming administration will be responsible for deciding whether to extend the deduction or allow it to expire.

Because of these changes, the next few years present critical planning opportunities for individuals over the age of 65. For couples, combining the enhanced senior deduction (\$12,000) with the standard deduction (\$34,700) can create a potential reduction in taxable income of \$46,700. In addition,

taxpayers may now take the standard deduction and still deduct up to \$2,000 in charitable contributions bringing the potential total deduction to just under \$50,000.

These changes create an important window for proactive tax planning. Strategies like managing withdrawals from retirement accounts, evaluating Roth conversions, timing capital gains, or coordinating charitable giving may help reduce taxable income and limit how much of your Social Security benefit is ultimately taxable. In some cases, careful planning can help smooth income over several years to avoid higher tax brackets later in retirement. Reviewing these strategies now can make a meaningful difference not only in your current tax situation but also in preserving more of your income and assets over time.

Taking the time to walk through the different options available to you could provide significant benefits for both you and your family in the years ahead. ♥

Questions answered in Lebo Financial Answers are provided by John McGowan, CFA MBA at Carson Wealth.

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Lebo Letters

Puzzle can be found on Page 22

- Across**
3. NEEDLEAND BEAN
 5. HABERMAN
 - 8.HOMERULECHARTER
 11. UPPERSTCLAIR
 14. ABDUCTION
 17. KEYSTONEOAKS
 18. ROLLERS
 19. STCLAIRHOSPITAL
 21. TEN
 22. BOOKSANCTUARY
- Down**
1. DORMONT
 2. WASHINGTONROAD
 4. BIRDPARK
 6. NOVEMBER
 7. BEVERLY ROAD
 9. COMMUNITY
 10. TRECITYUSA
 12. FOUR
 13. FIVE
 15. LINCOLN
 16. STADIUM
 20. THESALOON

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Lebo Letters

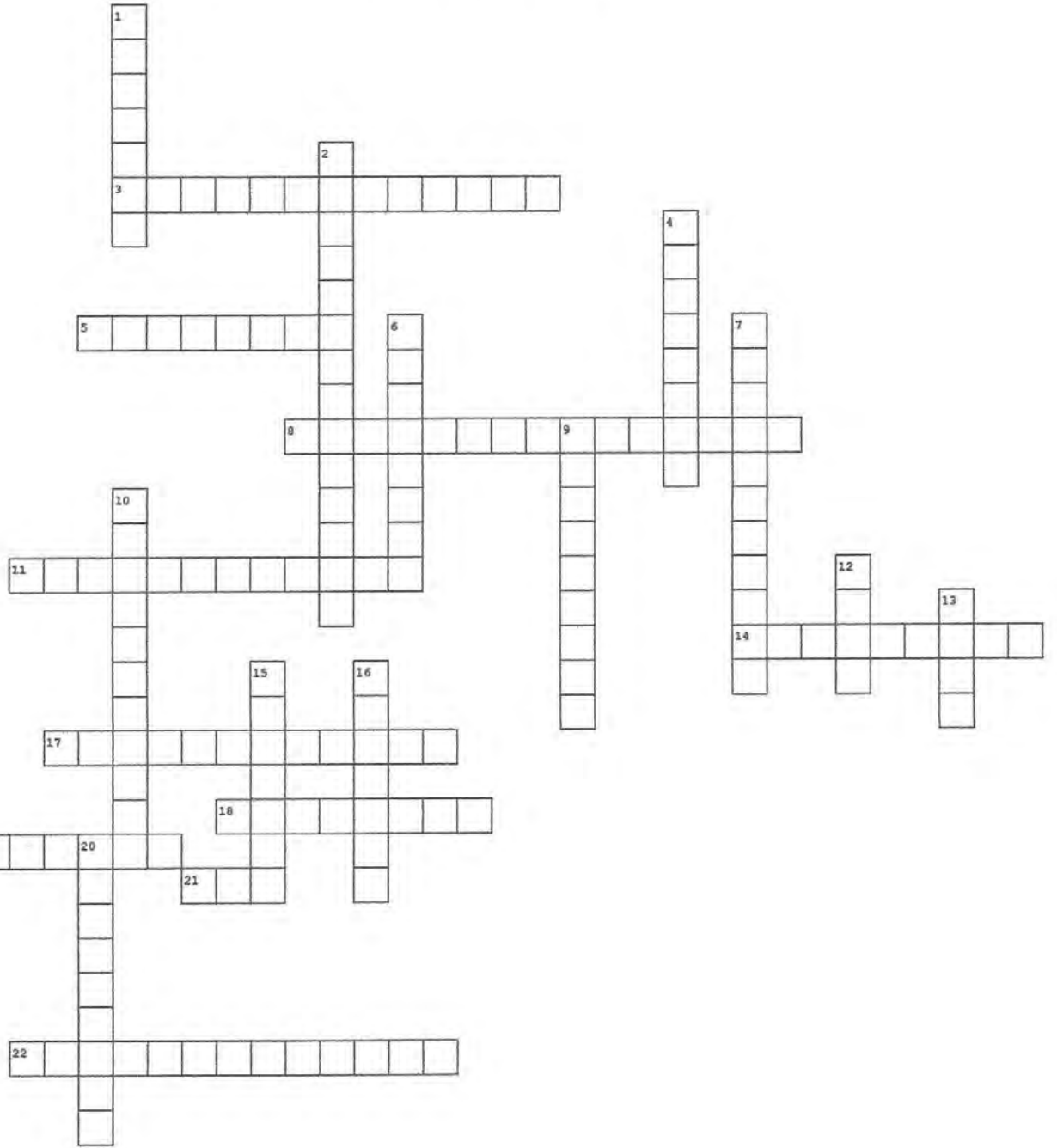
Answers can be found on Page 21

Across

- 3. Castle Shannon Blvd business where beans meet beats
- 5. Last name of Mt. Lebanon Chief of Police
- 8. Form of Government that Mt. Lebanon operates under
- 11. Township that borders Mt. Lebanon to the Southwest?
- 14. 2011 movie starring Taylor Latuner and Lily Collins filmed in Mt. Lebanon
- 17. High school other than Mt. Lebanon located in Mt. Lebanon
- 18. Local Business you swear you're "just popping in for 5 minutes"
- 19. Largest employer in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania
- 21. By the numbers-how many school buildings does the Mt. Lebanon School District have?
- 22. Status formally granted to the Mt. Lebanon Public Library by its board of trustees in February 2025

Down

- 1. Next door neighbor Borough with great food options
- 2. Street where parallel parking builds character
- 4. 42-acre green space bounded by Washington Road, Beadling Road and Mayfair Drive
- 6. What month did The Lebo Beat publish its first issue?
- 7. Mt. Lebanon business-district street
- 9. What this crossword is really about
- 10. What designation did the Arbor Day Foundation bestow upon Mt. Lebanon in 2007?
- 12. Trophy check - how many WPIAL crowns belong to Mt. Lebanon Girls Basketball?
- 13. Number of Commissioners in Mt. Lebanon
- 15. Which elementary school is celebrating its centennial in April?
- 16. Mt. Lebanon High School graduation location, weather permitting
- 20. Where everyone runs into someone they know





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