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LEBO BEAT

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Twin Hills Trails Restoration Project Revives Fragile Streambank Ecosystem

Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy receives grant funding to remove invasive species and reintroduce native plants to protected parkland By Sarah Core

A quiet transformation is underway at Twin Hills Trails Park, where volunteers, conservationists and community partners are working to restore one of Mt. Lebanon's most environmentally sensitive natural spaces.

Thanks to a nearly \$10,000 grant from the Eaton Charitable Fund, the Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy has begun a large-scale effort to revive the park's riparian ecosystem — removing invasive species and reintroducing native plants, trees and shrubs along the streambank that winds through the 25-acre woodland.

As summer approaches, birdwatchers, dog walkers and hikers are once again filling Mt. Lebanon's local parks. Twin Hills Trails, nestled between Mt. Lebanon and Scott Township, remains a favorite destination for residents in the Twin Hills neighborhood. The park features nine trails and paths for easy hiking, along with wooden bridges, benches, stairs and even a birdwatching hut for hobbyist birders.

But decades of yard waste dumping, combined with seeds spread by birds and wind, allowed invasive, non-native species to take

hold throughout the streambeds, slowly degrading the fragile ecosystem.

In March, the Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy received the Eaton Charitable Fund grant, making restoration of the riparian area possible. The fund is part of Eaton Corp., a power management company with locations in the Pittsburgh region. Environmental stewardship and support for local nonprofit organizations are central pillars of the company's philanthropic mission.

"We were so lucky to get this grant," said board
Continued on page 19



Group photo from the April planting session for the Twin Hills improvement project that had 45 participants, including Scouting America Troop 22. (Photo provided)

96-Year-Old Time Capsule Found Inside St. Paul's Episcopal Church Cornerstone

Copper capsule discovered during historical research will remain sealed until the church's centennial in 2030 By Annabelle Thomas

Early last year, active church member Geoff Hurd made a surprising discovery while researching the history of St. Paul's Episcopal Church: A time capsule had been placed inside the building's cornerstone during its original construction in 1930.

The capsule has since been retrieved and relocated after concerns arose about upcoming renovations to the church's exterior, but it will not be opened until 2030.

Hurd, a history enthusiast, had been researching newspaper archives for the church's 100th anniversary celebration in 2024 when he realized the capsule had

been created and hidden all these years.

"In my life experience, most people and most institutions think that they're not

making history, even though they are," Hurd said. "They rarely leave any breadcrumbs that are of interest to people who follow."

St. Paul's originally relocated to Mt. Lebanon in 1924 from the South Hills, but for the first six years, members congregated at

Washington Elementary School while plans for construction began. It was not until 1930 that the church

Continued on page 22

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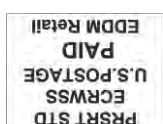
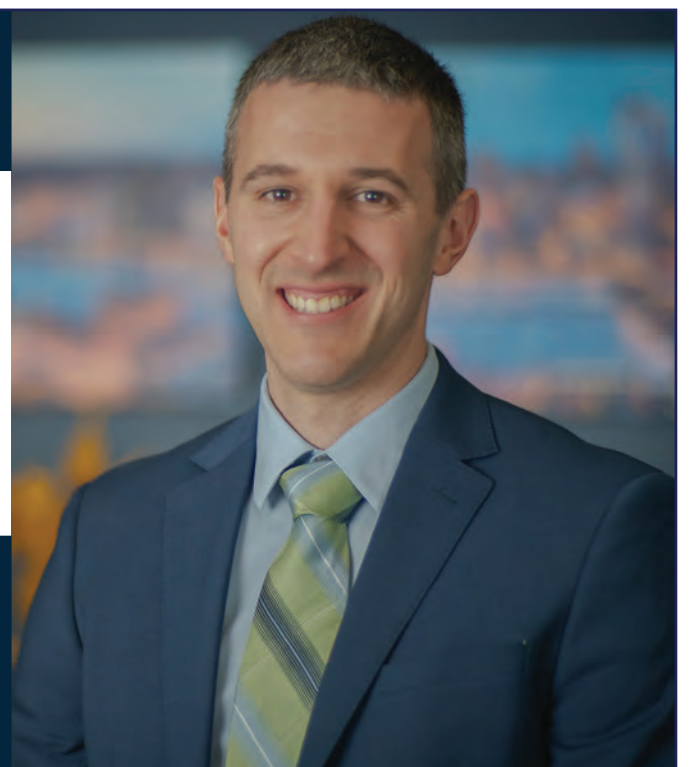
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School District Announces Leadership Changes, Honors and Special Events

Mt. Lebanon School District is preparing for several notable transitions and recognitions in the coming months, ranging from leadership appointments to national honors for educators and a special tribute tied to the Blue Devils football program.

Dr. Natasha Dirda named assistant superintendent

Beginning in July, Dr. Natasha Dirda will join Mt. Lebanon School District as the new assistant superintendent of secondary education.

Dirda comes to Mt. Lebanon from South Fayette Township School District, but her connection to the district dates back years. Early in her career, she served as a unit principal at Mt. Lebanon High School and also worked as principal at Markham Elementary School.

District officials say her familiarity with the community and prior experience within Mt. Lebanon schools will provide continuity and leadership as she steps into the role overseeing secondary education.

Dirda has built a reputation for instructional leadership and student-centered educational practices throughout her career and is expected to begin transitioning into the position this summer.

New marching band director named

Mt. Lebanon also will have a new marching band director this year.

Brett McCutcheon, currently a band teacher at Mt. Lebanon High School, will

now oversee and manage the school's marching band program.

The marching band remains a visible and celebrated part of the school community, performing at football games, parades and community events throughout the year. McCutcheon's appointment continues the district's emphasis on music education and student involvement in the arts.

Foster Elementary teacher selected for national STEM institute

Foster Elementary teacher Margaret Satersmoen has been selected to participate in the 2026 Liftoff Summer Institute, a nationally competitive STEM education program sponsored by the University of Texas Center for Space Research and Pennsylvania's Space Grant Consortium.

The program selects educators from across the country to deepen their knowledge of science, technology, engineering and mathematics through space education initiatives.

Participants engage in immersive activities designed to build critical-thinking, collaboration and problem-solving skills while exploring real-world applications connected to space exploration and scientific discovery.

This year's theme, "Moon to Mars: A New Era of Discovery," focuses on NASA's Artemis program, which aims to return astronauts to the moon for the first time in more than 50 years while laying the groundwork

for future missions to Mars.

The institute will take place June 22-26 and will include experiments, presentations from NASA subject-matter experts and astronauts, and opportunities for educators to network and share innovative lesson plans and classroom strategies.

District officials praised Satersmoen's selection as both a professional achievement and a benefit for students who will ultimately gain exposure to advanced STEM concepts and hands-on learning experiences.

For more information about the program, visit the University of Texas Center for Space Research website.

Mt. Lebanon to honor legendary football coach

Mt. Lebanon's football game against North Allegheny on Oct. 23 will carry added significance this fall as the district formally dedicates the naming of the football field in honor of former coach Art Walker.

The dedication will create a meaningful connection between past and present, as Walker's son, Art Walker Jr., currently serves as head coach at North Allegheny.

Walker remains one of the most respected figures in Mt. Lebanon football history, and the ceremony is expected to draw strong community support as the district recognizes his impact on generations of student-athletes and the broader football program. ♥

Mt. Lebanon School District Calendar

MAY 26 High School Spring Sports Recognition Night Time: 7 p.m. High School Auditorium	JES Field Day WES 5th Grade Recognition Howe Bite of the World Time: 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
MAY 27 WES Field Day JMS Band Concert Time: 7:30 p.m. High School Auditorium	High School Class of 2026 Picnic Time: 12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
MAY 28 Howe Field Day MES PTA Appreciation Social High School Prom Time: 7 p.m. - 11 p.m. Omni William Penn Hotel	JUNE 3 MES Field Day & Ice Cream Social Commencement High School Stadium
MAY 29 Howe Field Day (Rain Date) HES Field Day LES Grand Finale JES Color Run Time: 2:30 p.m. WES Kona Ice Time: 3:30 p.m.	JUNE 4 Last Day of School 12 p.m. Dismissal for Students K-11 Clap Out Time: 11:45 a.m. Elementary School Buildings Commencement (Rain Date) High School Stadium
JUNE 1 FES 5th Grade Carnival Time: 12 p.m. - 3p.m. MMS 8th Grade Recognition Main Park Senior Send Offs Time: 3:15 p.m. Elementary School Buildings	JUNE 6 SAT High School JUNE 8 School Board Discussion Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m. High School Room D205
JUNE 2 FES Field Day HES 5th Grade Farewell	JUNE 9-11 Snow Make-Up Days JUNE 15 School Board Regular Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m. High School Room D205 JUNE 17 Kennywood Day

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Good in the LEBOhood

By Tressa Glover, Creator & Host, "Yinz Are Good" podcast

It's time for your good news, Lebo! This column, inspired by my podcast, "Yinz Are Good", is our collective spot to celebrate and say "thank you" to the people who lift us up, lend us support and enrich our lives. The people who ask themselves, "What can I do today to make our world a better place?" and then go out and do it.

This month, we're shifting gears from your physical Kindness Crate notes to one of the virtual variety: I received a lovely email from Lebo resident Preethi Ravi with the subject line, "Kindness Crates Story." As I settled in and began to read Preethi's words, I felt a smile creep onto my face and my hand go to my heart. By the end of the email, that smile was plastered across my face, my hand was still on my heart, and tears had welled in my eyes. I felt uplifted, hopeful and heartened. I felt the power and possibility of community. And I'm happy to share her story with you. Her email reads:

"My name is Preethi Ravi. I have a kindness story I wanted to share with you to celebrate a neighbor in our community.

"Olivia Benson and family.

"In July 2025, I moved to Mt. Lebanon with my husband, our toddler and our dog.

"We had moved from Singapore, and while we had heard wonderful things about the Mt. Lebanon School District, I still did not know what this new neighborhood would hold for us. As

an Indian family, Singapore had felt familiar. Pittsburgh felt full of possibility, but also uncertainty. I was anxious, hopeful and trying to imagine how we would build a life here.

"Then, one sunny afternoon, there was a knock at our door.

"Our neighbor Olivia was standing outside with her dog's leash in one hand and a bag of goodies in the other. I still remember that sight so clearly. Something about her walking up to welcome us instantly calmed a part of my anxiety.

"I was cooking, so my husband stepped outside with our dog. Olivia introduced herself, asked where we had moved from, how we were settling in and what we did for work. When my husband mentioned that I would soon be looking for a job in communications, Olivia immediately said, 'I might have something for her.'

"She took down our names and numbers. "A few weeks later, the organization she worked with called me for a first interview. A few weeks after that, I got the job. "It was huge for me.

"When I moved here, I had quietly prepared myself for a long job search. Six months, maybe a year. With layoffs, AI changing the job market and uncertainty everywhere, I thought that was the reality I needed to accept.

"But within two months, I had a job at an organization I genuinely loved. "Serendipity, maybe.



Preethi Ravi (Photo provided)

"But what changed my life was not just the job. It was someone's kindness.

"Olivia could have easily said, 'I'll refer you,' and forgotten about it. Many people do. But she followed through. She helped in the way she could. And that one gesture changed not only my life, but also my husband's and my toddler's lives. It made the idea of America as a land of opportunity feel real.

"I had moved to Pittsburgh after a difficult season of depression, anxiety and uncertainty around work. When I found support, community and opportunity here, life started to feel hopeful again.

"In November, Olivia and her family invited us to Thanksgiving dinner. That was completely new to us. And what moved me most was that she welcomed people who had been strangers only



Olivia Benson (Photo provided)

months before into a full family dinner. Her family, her in-laws and her dad were all so warm, open and generous. They made us feel at home.

"So, this is really a thank-you note.

"Thank you, Olivia, for seeing a new family and choosing to welcome them.

"Thank you, Mt. Lebanon, for giving us more than a neighborhood—for giving us kindness, connection and a place to begin again."

Hear, hear. And to Olivia and family: "Yinz Are Good".

You can drop a note of kindness or gratitude in one of our Kindness Crates, located at Commonwealth Press, Lebo Subs, Rollier's, and Sapling & Sons. You can also email your good news directly to me at yinzaregood@gmail.com. To listen to the "Yinz Are Good" podcast, click the links at www.yinzaregood.com. ♥

CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2026 LEBO BEAT SPECIAL SECTION HONOR. RECOGNIZE. CELEBRATE.

A COMMUNITY TRIBUTE IN OUR JUNE ISSUE

The *Lebo Beat* is proud to present a special commemorative section dedicated to the Class of 2026—highlighting the achievements, stories, and bright futures of our local graduates. This section will feature:

- Complete List of Graduates
- Academic Achievements & Honors
- College Plans & Future Paths
- Student Memories
- Teacher Recognition

A true snapshot of this milestone moment for our community.



FOR FAMILIES

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- Show your pride in a public, lasting format

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FOR EMPLOYERS & LOCAL BUSINESSES

Recognize the young people who have contributed to your business:

- Celebrate student employees who showed up, worked hard, and made an impact
- Reinforce your company's commitment to supporting local youth
- Build goodwill with families and the broader community
- Position your business as one that invests in the next generation

Whether it's a summer employee, part-time team member, or intern—this is a chance to say: "We're proud of you—and grateful you were part of our team."

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- Reaches thousands of local households in Mt. Lebanon
- Celebrates a milestone moment the entire community cares about
- Creates a permanent, shareable keepsake
- Aligns your message with positivity, pride, and local connection

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BUSINESS BEAT

Mt. Lebanon Teen Builds Massive Following with Pittsburgh Sports Instagram Account

Steel City Recaps creator Ronan Young turned his passion for Pittsburgh sports into a growing media brand followed by more than 33,000 people By Scarlett Sweeney

Mt. Lebanon senior Ronan Young has loved Pittsburgh sports since he was a kid. On Dec. 13, 2022, Young launched his Instagram account, @steel_city_recaps, a page that posts daily Pittsburgh sports and city updates. Three and a half years later, the account has grown to 33,400 followers and changed Young's life forever.

During his freshman year of high school, Young enrolled in a construction course at Parkway West after encouragement from his dad. After realizing the class was not the right fit for him, he decided to pursue something more aligned with his interests, ultimately leading him to start his Instagram account.

"The process of starting my account was really just clicking a couple of buttons and going," Young said. "The hard work comes whenever you're putting yourself out there."

Once Young launched the account, he recalled facing initial backlash. However, by taking things day by day and focusing on his long-term goals, he stayed motivated, allowing not only the account to grow, but himself as well.

"Honestly, [the hate] is more funny to me than anything," Young said. "I think I initially struggled with it, but it was also the fuel to the fire. I had gone through hating [trade school] so much that I began to love something that even had its negative parts. The criticism is always gonna come, but you're never gonna get criticism from anyone that's doing more than you."

Young said people now regularly approach him and ask for photos when he attends events such as Steelers training camp.

"One time, this little girl came up to me and went, 'You're Steel City Recaps, right?'" Young said. "I noticed she had a phone case with players' signatures on it, and as I headed out, she asked me to sign her phone case. I'll never forget signing that phone case because [being] put on the same pedestal as players that I look up to showed me I really had an effect, not just on social media, but real stuff too."

During the Steelers season, Young's average day often includes spending several hours at Acrisure Stadium, whether filming

content, meeting players and coaches, or promoting his brand. Through those experiences, Young said building personal relationships has become one of the biggest keys to his success.

"I always tell people a handshake is the key to life," Young said. "I can't tell you how many times a handshake has gotten me somewhere behind the scenes."

Over the past year, Young said many events have changed his life, but the one constant has been Steel City Recaps.

"It's not just a sports page, it's my life," Young said. "Unfortunately, I didn't get into the school I wanted to, and that was very challenging for me. I was down for a week and then had a blow-up on Steel City Recaps and I forgot about it. Steel City is about the only constant in my life."

Young described his future as "up in the air." Next year, he plans to work at Pro Knitwear with his dad, where he will serve as a sales executive while also helping with social media. He also plans to continue growing Steel City Recaps for years to come.

For kids interested in



Ronan Young (left) with Kirk Herbstreit, ESPN College GameDay broadcaster and former Ohio State quarterback. (Photo provided)

launching a sports broadcasting account or putting themselves out there creatively, Young strongly encourages them to take the leap.

"Starting anything is hard," Young said. "If something crosses your mind, you should go do it. Is it day one or one day? There are so many things you can start, whether it's a business, a gym membership, who knows. But if you just go out there and do it, at least you did it and tried something new."

Young also emphasized the importance of understanding that success rarely comes without setbacks.

He said failure has played a major role in helping him grow.

"I have failed at so many things in my life," Young said. "But I'm so happy I failed. There can't be mountains without the valleys. There are negative parts all the time with Steel City Recaps, but I don't let it get to me, because I know once there's negatives, what's next? Positive. At the end of the day, you gotta think to yourself, just do it. Don't half-a-- it. Wake up, breathe, and just go do something that you want to achieve if you care enough about it." ♥



Young Entrepreneur Launches Commercial Signage Business at 12

Now 13, Conner Boal grows CBI Lighting with 3D printing, ADA-compliant designs and plans to expand
By Annabelle Thomas

Mt. Lebanon entrepreneur Conner Boal is the founder and sole employee of CBI Lighting, a commercial signage business founded two years ago when Conner was just 12 years old.

Now 13, Boal first got the idea for the business when he began selling 3D-printed products to friends. What began as a hobby became a realization that his work could turn into something much more.

"I started doing 3D printing when I was around 10, and I always just did it as a hobby," Boal said. "Then my family started a daycare, so they asked me to make signs for them. And then I found out you can make money from it, and it just spiraled out from there."

Growing up around construction, Boal was a quick learner and adapted his affinity for 3D printing to include the cutting, sanding and painting that larger signs require. CBI Lighting can provide everything from smaller nameplates and room signs to larger exterior displays. His process varies greatly depending on the project, from the initial meeting with a client to the completion of a finished product

can take anywhere from one day to three weeks.

CBI Lighting is a one-man show and has been since its inception. Recently, Boal has investigated expanding his business and hiring another employee. He estimates that he has served between 10 and 15 clients so far, and each project takes careful consideration, time and effort.

"It's a big change from going to hanging out with your friends to working all day," Boal said. "Anytime I'm done with my homework, we're right to work. But it's really paid off."

Over his two years of ownership, Boal has grown CBI Lighting entirely independently. After initial financial support from his parents, Boal taught himself the ins and outs of not only his craft, but also what might be missing from the market.

Boal advertises that CBI Lighting signs are ADA compliant and he offers Braille lettering to better suit the needs of his clients. Working within ADA guidelines can mean only using certain fonts, sizes and backgrounds for regular signs, in addition to the spacing and sizing of Braille. Not all larger sign businesses



CBI Lighting designed the Betsy's Homemade Ice Cream sign displayed on the storefront. (Photo provided).

can cater to this certification, and the site explains that the ability to cater to each client is one of the benefits of working with a smaller business dedicated to good quality.

Businesses are often more than happy to work with Boal because of his portfolio. The signs speak for

themselves, no matter how young their maker.

"I've had a few people that are a little weirded out by [my age], but everyone else has respected what I've done," Boal said. "They've seen my website. They've seen my signs."

CBI Lighting has relied mainly on Google Ads and word-of-mouth so far, but Boal is optimistic about his business and its future. Hiring another employee is just the next step, and he's still contemplating where CBI Lighting could go from there.

"I'm going to see where it takes me," Boal explained. "I could grow it when I'm older. I'm thinking about selling it when I'm 18, too, and then starting another business."

Though entrepreneurship may not be every 13-year-old's idea of fun, it's clear that Boal has found his passion. As far as recommending it to peers, he understands that he may be in the minority among teens.

"I get some people not doing it," Boal said. "But it's really paid off. I love working, I love it to death."

To support Connor Boal or find out more about CBI Lighting, visit www.cbilighting.com. ♥

College Beat with Eaton Prep

Expert guidance for navigating college admissions, testing and academic success

Navigating the road to college can feel overwhelming for both students and parents. From SATs and ACTs to AP exams, applications, essays, timelines and testing strategies, there are countless questions along the way. In this new column, local college preparation experts will provide practical advice, insider tips and answers to readers' most common questions to help students feel more confident, prepared and

ready for the next step in their academic journey. This question was on the March SAT and appeared in Eaton materials before the test.

Question: How does the College Board make geometry difficult?

Answer: Difficult geometry questions often require the test takers to draw an additional line and are often multi-step. This question was on the March SAT and appeared in Eaton materials before the test.

Example: A square is inscribed in a circle. If the area of the circle is 18 pi, what is the side of the square?

Answer: The diagonal of the square is the diameter of the circle which must be drawn. This line creates two isosceles triangles. The side of the square is 6. For centuries a mathematical mystery was trying to construct a square that had the same area as a circle. Finally, it was deemed impossible

because the value of pi is transcendental (infinite).

Even though this mathematical problem was impossible, the phrase "how do you square that?" became an idiom that means how do you reconcile two conflicting ideas. ♥

Eaton Prep's next class begins at the Mt. Lebanon Recreation Center at 2 p.m. on June 14. For more information or to enroll, call 412-831-2723.

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Mt. Lebanon High School AP Art Show Draws Crowds, Showcases Student Talent

From immersive installations to large-scale exhibits, students transformed Center Court into a gallery-style experience

Story and photos by Lindi Pastorius

Walking through the main doors of Mt. Lebanon High School, visitors were greeted by the sounds of the high school string quartet, creating a warm, gallery-like atmosphere. Student volunteers offered visitors a QR code, where a quick scan pulled up the program for the evening — guiding guests through events, exhibits and highlights as they navigated this year's art show.

A packed exhibit room had patrons brushing shoulders as they traversed rolling felt boards filled with artwork from students who are not currently enrolled in Advanced Placement classes but still produced pieces this year worthy of display. The lower level of the main building also featured other presentations, including a floor-spanning tulip garden complete with whimsical creatures, an overhead floor-projection installation, and a myriad of imaginative animal and sea-life portraits displayed on tables lining the perimeter of the room.

Traveling up the grand staircase, visitors ascended beneath the Lebo Proud ribbon installation — glittering shades of blue and gold created and hung by last year's AP Art students. On the second floor, a showcase of pottery large and small included intricate coil pots, a standout sun-flower-shaped bowl, and a Spider-Man-themed plate that rounded out the unique display. The adjacent wall held a giant, yet lifelike, cardboard insect exhibit that will migrate to the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden for display after the school year ends.

As the jazz combo piped the sounds of "Dream a Little Dream of Me" into the air from the top floor, the ambiance in Center Court, bustling with visitors, was electric. With a goal of topping last year's attendance of 1,000 guests, this year's art show appeared poised to exceed that mark.

An art sale and fundraising opportunities also were available to patrons. The art for sale was donated by students, with proceeds benefiting the Mt. Lebanon Foundation for

Education. Helping raise funds for the MLFE while highlighting its mission of enhancing and supporting student experiences across the district, several tables were staffed by current and former board members who came together to support the event.

In a front display, senior Maddie Knowles caught the attention of guests with her mixed-media exhibit, incorporating 3D art into 2D compositions. Drawing inspiration from meaningful aspects of her life, Knowles explored everyday experiences through the lens of different music genres. Set to attend Savannah College of Art and Design in the fall, her passion for art was evident in the eye-catching exhibit.

"I like to showcase my work so people can get an idea of what I am interested in and how I perceive things that I want or that I'm invested in," Knowles said. "It's nice to showcase your passions and for people to see that in an artistic way."

Proudly displayed next to the grand staircase, Ava Heidenreich's completed and framed 2026

senior mural drew the attention of many visitors. Across from it, the historic Blue Devil murals painted on the walls added a touch of nostalgia against the backdrop of the eclectic AP Art exhibits.

Also highlighted was Denison University-bound senior Olivia Marcovitz's exhibit, which spanned the walls on the right side of Center Court. Her work included several large displays, including a floor installation incorporating found objects and a giant canvas constructed by piecing together four smaller works into one commanding piece. Reflecting on her own journey, Marcovitz found inspiration through creation and the symbolic reinvention of self — a theme evident throughout her work.

For attendees walking through the carefully crafted event, it was easy to forget the art show was taking place inside Mt. Lebanon High School. The atmosphere was polished, intentional and far more reminiscent of a professional gallery than Center Court. Enhanced

by live music and fundraising efforts, the visual presentations did not disappoint and offered the community a glimpse into the remarkable talent of these student artists.

The stunning displays, along with the hard work of art teachers Mrs. Rodriguez

and Mr. Kuhar, staff members and numerous volunteers, captured the attention of everyone who attended. It was clear this year's art show represented a meaningful investment by all involved — and the final masterpiece was impressive. ♥



Lebo Proud ribbon installation greeted guests as they entered the school for the art show.



Cardboard insect display that will be transferred to the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden



Visitors view artists display at Center Court.



Olivia Marcovitz and her giant canvas piece.



Tulip garden



Maddie Knowles and her exhibit.

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Mt. Lebanon Public Library Launches ‘Unearth a Story’ Summer Reading Program

Programs for children, teens and adults will feature hands-on activities, prizes, special guests and summer-long reading challenges *By Laurie Garvey*

This summer, the Mt. Lebanon Public Library is inviting readers of all ages to dig in and discover something new. The 2026 Summer Reading Program, themed “Unearth a Story,” runs from June 8–July 31, with a full lineup of events, activities and incentives aimed at encouraging reading all summer long.

The program kicks off June 8 with sign-up opportunities in the main library. Families can stop by throughout the day from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. to register, explore activity stations and get a first look at what’s in store.

A summer of discovery for kids

Young readers can expect a day packed with excitement at the June 8 kickoff, including a folder-decoration station, a dinosaur art station and a special interactive “mini museum” presented by the Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

Throughout the summer, children can track their reading, collect brag tags and work toward prizes — including a free book and coupons from local businesses when they achieve their reading goals. Bingo sheets add another layer of fun to help keep kids motivated.

Special guests and events will pop up all summer long, from visits with “Mr. McSlithers” and “The Bug Man” to fan-favorite programs such as Battle of the Books, Dino Karaoke and even cave painting. Organizers encourage families to monitor the library calendar for specific event dates. A summerlong America 250 display also will be featured throughout the program.

Teens get creative — and competitive

Teens are encouraged to register in person and track their progress using reading logs, with an online option

available through Beanstack. Participants will receive one paper log per person, and 10 hours of reading earns an entry into drawings for one of 10 \$50 gift cards to local favorites including Uptown Coffee, Grandpa Joe’s, Learning Express, Panaderia Jazmin, Lebo Subs, Amy’s Bakery, Target, Hot Topic and Miniso.

Every teen who completes the program will receive a book of their choice along with coupons to Lebo Subs and the Hollywood Theater.

The teen kickoff event will feature henna tattoos, followed by a summer filled with hands-on programming. Highlights include a Tuesday

evening table hockey league led by local instructor Tom Kearns, a plant biology session with the Allegheny Land Trust, and a Labubu clothing-making workshop led by Virginia Shields.

Additional in-house activities include building Zen gardens, creating wooden Dungeons & Dragons-inspired mimic monsters and the return of the custom Funko Pops event.

Adults invited to participate

Adult readers also are encouraged to join the fun by registering online, logging their reading and submitting book reviews for chances to win themed prize baskets. Curated booklists and displays throughout the library will provide inspiration for summer reading selections.

Two special events will round out the adult program: a Summer Reading Gathering on June 13 at 7 p.m. and an End-of-Summer Soirée on Aug. 4 from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

With programs for children, teens and adults alike, this year’s Summer Reading initiative promises something for everyone. Whether discovering a new favorite author, exploring hands-on activities or simply enjoying a good book on a warm summer day, the library’s message is clear: there is always something new to unearth. ♥

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Stronger Core, Better Quality of Life: How Pelvic Floor Therapy at St. Clair Health Is Helping Local Women

By Eleazer Gorenstein

For many women, issues like bladder leakage, pelvic pain or discomfort after pregnancy are quietly endured rather than openly discussed. But at St. Clair Health, a growing focus on pelvic floor therapy is helping change that — offering relief, education and a path back to everyday confidence for patients across the South Hills, including Mt. Lebanon.

Pelvic floor dysfunction affects women at every stage of life, from young athletes to new mothers to those navigating menopause. Symptoms can include urinary leakage, frequent trips to the bathroom, constipation, pelvic pain and even discomfort during everyday activities.

“These are things that impact quality of life in a big way,” explained occupational therapist Jessica Hammond, who specializes in pelvic floor therapy with St. Clair. “But they’re often brushed off as something you just have to live with. And that’s simply not true.”

Pelvic floor therapy is a specialized, highly individualized form of care that addresses the muscles, tissues and coordination involved in bladder, bowel and core function. At St. Clair, the approach goes beyond just treating symptoms.

“We really look at the whole person,” Hammond said. “It’s not just about stopping leakage or reducing pain. It’s about helping

patients understand their bodies, how everything works together, and why dysfunction may be happening in the first place.”

This holistic approach considers physical, lifestyle and even emotional factors that may be contributing to symptoms.

One of the key messages from the pelvic floor therapy team is that this care isn’t just for one specific group. It’s for women across the lifespan: Those that are pregnant or postpartum, active and athletic women and women who are in midlife and beyond.

“You don’t have to wait until something becomes severe,” Hammond noted. “The earlier you understand your body, the better you can prevent future issues.”

Pelvic floor therapy at St. Clair Health is tailored to each individual patient; there’s no one-size-fits-all plan. During an initial visit, patients work one-on-one with a therapist to discuss symptoms, goals and daily challenges. From there, a personalized plan may include education about pelvic health and function, targeted exercises and movement strategies, techniques to improve muscle coordination and control and guidance on posture, activity and lifestyle habits.

Sessions typically last about an hour and many patients begin to see meaningful improvement within

four to six visits, though plans are adjusted based on individual needs.

Hammond also pointed out that while Kegel exercises are often associated with pelvic health, they’re not always the right solution, and in some cases may even be counterproductive.

“The pelvic floor is like any other muscle group,” she said. “It needs to move through a full range of motion. For some people, strengthening is important. For others, it’s about learning to relax or coordinate those muscles properly.”

That’s why an evaluation with a trained therapist can be key to getting the right approach.

Ultimately, what sets St. Clair apart is its integrated model of care. Pelvic floor therapists work closely with physicians in urology, gynecology and primary care to ensure patients receive comprehensive support.

The program includes multiple specialists and convenient locations, including the Dunlap Family Outpatient Center on Bower Hill Road and the St. Clair Health Outpatient Center in Bethel Park making care more accessible for local residents.

“We recognize that these issues can be complex,” Hammond said. “Sometimes it involves coordination with other providers, and we’re not afraid to bring in the right resources to fully support the patient.”



Left: Jessica Hammond, occupational therapist who specializes in pelvic floor therapy with St. Clair Health. Above: St. Clair Health Dunlap Family Outpatient is located at 1000 Bower Hill Road, Suite 7300.

Despite how common pelvic floor issues are, many women still hesitate to seek help. That’s something Hammond and her colleagues hope to change.

“Don’t be afraid to talk to your doctor,” she said. “And don’t hesitate to ask about pelvic floor therapy, even if it’s not brought up right away.”

For women in Mt. Lebanon and surrounding communities, the message is simple: Help is available, and

you don’t have to live with discomfort or disruption.

Whether it’s returning to exercise without worry, managing postpartum recovery or simply feeling more comfortable day to day, pelvic floor therapy can make a meaningful difference.

And often, it starts with just one conversation.

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A Lifetime in Lebo

Riccardo Ponzio reflects on family, travel and community

Riccardo Ponzio and his family moved to Mt. Lebanon in 1956 during his senior year of high school at Central Catholic High School. He moved from The Bluff area of Pittsburgh, overlooking the Monongahela River, because Duquesne University was razing his neighborhood to expand its school. "Nobody wanted to move," Ponzio noted. "We could see the whole area from there: the river, the fireworks, Mt. Washington."

The year after Ponzio moved, he ended up actually attending Duquesne University, where he became friends with several Mt. Lebanon High School graduates.

Upon moving to Mt. Lebanon as a teenager, Ponzio made many friends and appreciated how welcoming the community was. His father chose the area for the family because Mt. Lebanon was known as a fantastic place to raise a family, with easy access to transportation.

"It was so convenient for my parents, who were both still working downtown," Ponzio said. "The BG bus line was a half block from our house and stopped at Kaufmann's, where my mother worked."

Ponzio's father started a travel agency, Ponzio International Travel, in 1948. In 1956, Pan Am offered Ponzio's father the opportunity to fly in one of the first Boeing 707 jets, but the elder Ponzio had to pass up the opportunity as he was unable to close his office for the day. The younger Ponzio, however, was able to take that flight, which did an hour-long loop over Lake Erie. From then on, Ponzio was hooked on travel and the travel industry. He began working as a

travel counselor as a Duquesne student while taking courses in finance, economics and marketing.

Around that time Ponzio attended a student ball held at Duquesne, where he met the student body president of Seton Hill College, Carol Lee. He convinced her to allow him to present at Seton Hill about an upcoming College Week program in Bermuda. The presentation and the trip were a success, and a relationship blossomed between Ponzio and Carol Lee that has now spanned more than 60 years of marriage.

Ponzio and Carol Lee were wed in 1965 and bought their first home on Kelso Road. Eventually, they moved to the Mission Hills neighborhood, where they stayed for 40 years. They raised four children, all of whom graduated from Mt. Lebanon High School: Laura, Rick, Carla and John. The family was very active in the close-knit Mt. Lebanon community.

"I did a lot of coaching," Ponzio laughed. "I coached the girls' softball team and the boys' soccer team."

The family were active members of St. Bernard Church, where Carol Lee was the organist and her friend Tina Capecci sang. Another parishioner, Judy Gelman, wanted to start dance classes at St. Bernard, and the trio formed the Center for Theater Arts, where they initially charged \$1 per lesson. The group later moved to the Women's Club of Mt. Lebanon, and then to its current location at 250 Mt. Lebanon Blvd. The Center for Theater Arts now offers more than 80 classes.

"The growth of the program is very much a testament to the power of community in Mt. Lebanon and to the foresight and passion of



Recent photo of Riccardo and Carol. (Photo provided)

those three ladies," Ponzio stated.

Ponzio continued to expand his travel agency in downtown Pittsburgh and opened an office in Rome, Italy. His most memorable trips involved travel to Rome. In 1975, he coordinated 13 Pan Am charter flights from Pittsburgh to Rome for the Holy Year 1975. In 1986, the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh asked Ponzio to arrange travel to Rome for the elevation of Donald Wuerl to bishop. He planned a trip for 180 people to attend the elevation, and they all received a private audience with Pope John Paul II. On that trip to Rome, Ponzio had the opportunity to be blessed by Mother Teresa.

"I can't believe that within three days I held the hands of two living saints!" Ponzio exclaimed.

He has also enjoyed traveling to China, Japan, South Africa and Pakistan, where he visited his son who was a Fulbright Scholar.

After their children grew up,



Riccardo and Carol on their wedding day in 1965. (Photo provided)

Ponzio and Carol Lee moved to the Mt. Lebanon townhome community Main Line II. Ponzio moved his travel company to Washington Road in Uptown Mt. Lebanon and was able to walk to work.

In 2015, Ponzio had open-heart surgery and came to Providence Point for rehabilitation. He enjoyed it there so much that he suggested to Carol Lee that Providence Point would be their next move. They joined a waiting list a year later and became involved at Providence Point with various activities such as bocce tournaments, water volleyball, trips to the Pittsburgh Symphony and Pittsburgh Opera, as well as dining.

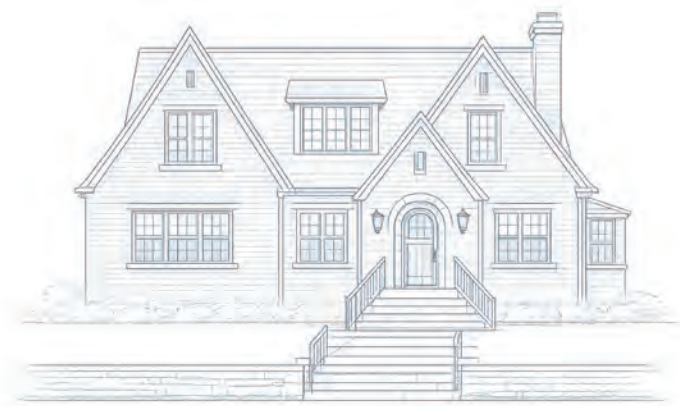
"We love being able to dine outdoors," Ponzio said.

In 2018, they finally made the move to Providence Point and are quite happy. They are still close to their hometown of Mt. Lebanon, and many of their friends and neighbors are also now living at Providence Point alongside them. ♥

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A First-Time Homebuyer's Guide

What to Know Before Buying a Home By Andrew Goff

Buying a first home is one of the biggest financial decisions a person will ever make. For many people it can be a rather intimidating prospect. Between navigating mortgage options, budgeting for hidden costs and competing in a fast-moving market, it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

The good news is with the right preparation—and the right local guidance—buyers can approach this daunting process with confidence.

Start With What You Can Truly Afford

One of the most common mistakes first-time buyers make is confusing what they can borrow with what they should borrow from a lender.

A bank or lender may approve someone for a certain amount, but that number may not necessarily account for their comfort level or lifestyle. One should always be wary of the notion of becoming "house poor," which means spending too much money on a house, necessitating financial cutbacks in other areas of life. A smart approach is to build a monthly budget that includes:

- Mortgage payments.
- Property taxes and insurance costs.
- Utilities and maintenance.
- Savings and everyday expenses.

A home should support one's life. It should not stretch it to its limits.

Get Pre-Approved Before You Start Shopping

Before a buyer falls in love with a home, it's important that they understand their buying power.

The pre-approval process is a critical first step when one is looking to buy a new home. A pre-approval gives a buyer a clear price range, stronger credibility with sellers and faster decision-making when they find the right home.

Most pre-approval applications can be done via online portals where borrowers can provide information and supply pay stubs, W-2s, bank statements and/or tax returns. The process can be done in a matter of moments, and a typical pre-approval can be valid for up to 120 days.

Working with a local lender can make this step especially valuable as they often understand neighborhood-specific pricing trends and can move quickly.

Get With the Right Real Estate Agent

Buyers should contact a real estate agent who works frequently in the areas in which they are looking. Having a real estate agent who is plugged in to the local market and knows of homes currently on the market and homes soon to come to market is paramount. Real estate agents assist buyers with making offers, selecting or not selecting relevant contingencies to sale, selecting or not selecting relevant inspections, negotiating a sales price, scheduling a home inspection and getting the buyer all the way through the process of closing on the home.

Plan for More Than the Down Payment

Many buyers focus on saving for a down payment, but there are additional costs to plan for. For example, closing costs are typically anywhere from 2 percent to 5 percent of the purchase price of the home. Additionally, there are typically home inspection and appraisal fees, initial repairs or updates to account for, as well as moving expenses.

Buyers should ensure that they leave a financial cushion after the closing to make the transition to homeownership smoother.

Think Long-Term When Choosing a Home

It's easy to get caught up in appearances and aesthetics, but the best first home is one that fits both a buyer's current needs and their future ones.

Buyers should always consider the home's location, neighborhood and commute (if applicable). School districts, resale value and potential for appreciation are also key considerations.

Buying with a long-term perspective can help one build equity and avoid outgrowing a home too quickly.

Avoid Common First-Time Buyer Pitfalls

Even well-prepared buyers can run into trouble. Some of the most common



mistakes include stretching a budget too thin, skipping a home inspection, draining savings for a down payment and making large purchases before closing.

A steady and informed approach will serve buyers far better than rushing into a decision.

Take Advantage of First-Time Homebuyer Programs

FHLBank Pittsburgh's First Front Door program provides money to help with down payments and closing costs for qualified first-time homebuyers. Additionally, many local banks offer their own first-time homebuyer programs. Buyers should check if they qualify for any first-time homebuyer programs to ensure they don't leave any money on the table.

The Value of Local Guidance

For first-time buyers, having a knowledgeable partner-making all the difference. A community bank offers something that's often hard to find elsewhere: Local insight, accessible decision-makers and a relationship-based approach.

Since they don't typically use large call centers or one-size-fits-all approaches, community banks can help buyers understand their market and their goals.

Ask Questions

Buying a home is not something people do every day. It is perfectly OK for a buyer to ask questions of their mortgage professional, real estate agent, title company and inspector. Those professionals will welcome the opportunity to educate buyers on their area of expertise or piece of the transaction.

Final Thought

Buying a first home doesn't have to feel over-

whelming. With the right preparation and the right guidance, it can be a rewarding and empowering experience.

Buyers should also make sure that they have some fun along the way! Buying a first home is literally a once-in-a-lifetime experience, so buyers should take the time to enjoy the journey of finding the right one for them. ♥

Andrew Goff is VP Residential Sales Manager at Brentwood Bank.

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MARY KAY

Mt. Lebanon Athletics Enters New Era with Leadership Changes

Bruce Fronk returns as head football coach while Daniel Bonaventura prepares to succeed retiring athletic director John Grogan By Samuel Palmerine

A new chapter is underway for Mt. Lebanon athletics, as the district welcomes both a new head football coach and a new athletic director for the 2026 season.

Bruce Fronk has been hired as the Blue Devils' head football coach, returning to a district he called a "dream job" after previously leaving for South Fayette.

"When I left ... my heart never left this place," Fronk said. "It is a special district and community that has a strong and proud football tradition."

Fronk takes over a program looking to bounce back from a challenging season, but he made clear his focus is on the future rather than past results.

"I am focused on who we are now and where we are going," he said. "Our

coaching staff is taking what we do well and developing plans to enhance those strengths."

Fronk emphasized building a connected culture that supports all levels of football, from youth teams through varsity.

"Our goal is to develop every player ... and ensure everyone knows their role," he said. "These will be the key things to help us build a consistent contender."

Describing himself as "a teacher at my core," Fronk said his coaching philosophy centers on developing players beyond the field.

"When your focus is helping the whole person ... winning on the field then happens," he said. "Winning is a byproduct of doing all of the little things right."



Bruce Fronk is the new head football coach at Mt. Lebanon. (Photo provided)

Fronk's hiring is not the only major shift for the district, as the athletic director position also is changing hands.

Longtime athletic director John Grogan is retiring after

26 years of service, during which he said the relationships he built became one of the most meaningful parts of his career.

"Serving this district has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life," Grogan said. "The relationships I've built have meant the world to me."

Grogan emphasized that while winning has always mattered, his primary focus was creating meaningful experiences for student-athletes.

"Although we always strived to win," he said, "teaching the many life lessons associated with sports is what I feel is the most important thing that we do."

Grogan reflected on how high school athletics have evolved over time, particularly with the rise of technology and increased specialization in sports.

"I have seen the use of technology increase and the amount of specializa-

tion and private coaching increase," he said. "But I believe our students' passion for their sport and their school continues to be a source of pride."

He added that athletics remain a critical part of the overall educational experience at Mt. Lebanon.

"I believe our athletic programs are a vital part of the education our students enjoy," he said.

Taking his place is Daniel Bonaventura, who was approved by the school board in March and will begin his role in May 2026.

Bonaventura currently serves as associate athletic director for student-athlete development at Robert Morris University, where he oversees leadership development, career readiness and community engagement initiatives. He also works as an academic liaison and sport administrator for the university's men's basketball program. ♥



Mt. Lebanon head football coach Bruce Fronk presents the school's NFL Draft Day football to former Blue Devils coach Art Walker during an event at the Historical Society of Mt. Lebanon. (Photo by Sarah Core)



From Mt. Lebanon to the Steelers

Lifelong teammates Alex Tecza and Eli Heidenreich continue a remarkable football journey from Lebo youth fields to the NFL By Eleazer Gorenstein

Long before they thought about stepping onto an NFL practice field, Alex Tecza and Eli Heidenreich were just kids in Mt. Lebanon -- running drills, competing against each other and learning the game they loved.

Years later, after sharing a high school championship run and navigating the demands of the United States Naval Academy, their paths remain intertwined. Now, with an opportunity to continue that journey with their hometown Pittsburgh Steelers, their story has come full circle in a way few could have imagined.

"It's almost unbelievable at this point," Tecza said. "You couldn't really draw it up much better than that: Two friends beating the odds from a small town in Western Pennsylvania."

A bond built from the beginning

Their connection dates to first grade, when both players first took the field in the Mt. Lebanon youth football system. Even then, there were signs of something special.

"I don't think anyone could predict that they would be teammates the whole way through to this point," said Eli's father, David Heidenreich. "But those two have always been intertwined since that first-grade year."

They didn't always play on the same team early on. In fact, they were often split up -- two of the best players competing against each other. But when they were finally paired together in all-star settings, their chemistry stood out.

"Those two kids ... when they're together, they're a dangerous combo," David

said. "I would never bet against them."

That connection only deepened over time. By high school, the two had become close friends and key pieces of a team that would go on to win a state championship.

More than just two players

For their former head coach at Mt. Lebanon High School, Bob Palko, their story is about more than just two standout athletes.

"The chemistry between those two wasn't only between those two -- it was their entire class," Palko said. "They were so selfless. They were excited for each other's success because they knew it helped the team."

Both Tecza and Heidenreich led more by example than by words, setting a tone that defined the program.

"They were fun to coach," Palko said. "You could coach them hard, and they didn't take it personally. They just wanted to get better."

That mindset helped carry them beyond high school, even as their paths grew more demanding.

A different kind of college experience

At the Naval Academy, football was only one part of a much larger commitment.

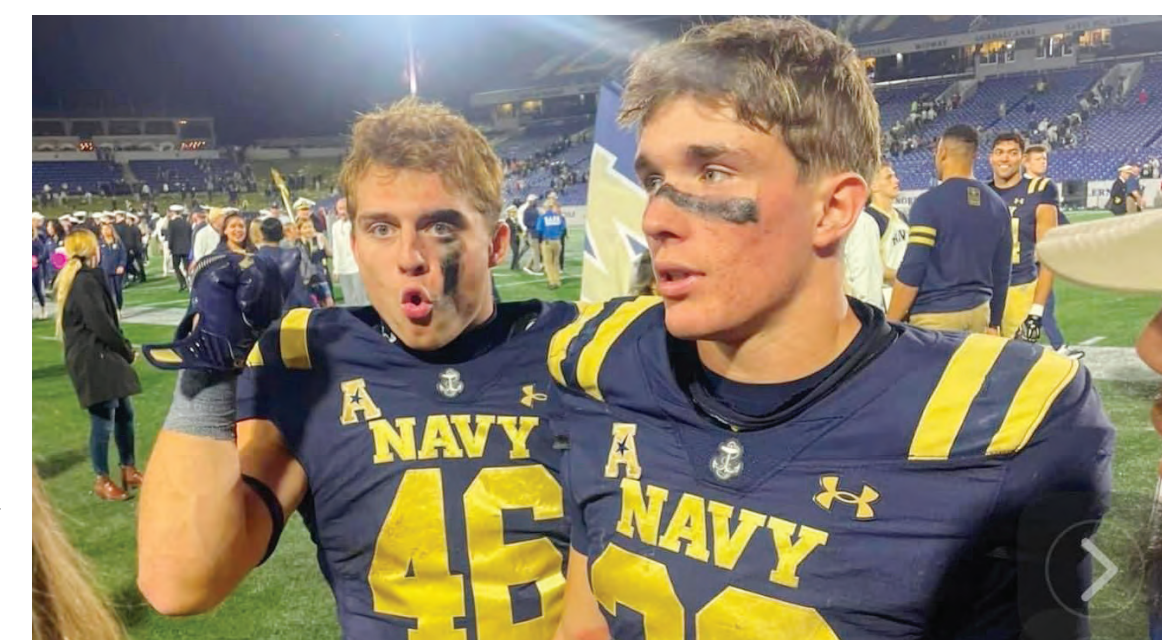
"Football's not even at the top of the list there," Palko said. "They've got so many other responsibilities."

For Tecza, having Heidenreich alongside him made all the difference.

"You can't get through that place alone," Tecza said. "Having someone I trusted there since day one was huge."



Eli Heidenreich (#8) and Alex Tecza (#5) spent years side-by-side on the football field, including their entire high school careers at Mt. Lebanon.



Their football journey also continued together during the past four years at the U.S. Naval Academy, where Tecza (#46) and Heidenreich (#22) played side-by-side. (Photos by David Heidenreich)

The experience tested them both physically and mentally, strengthening not only their games but their bond.

Overcoming the odds

Neither player took a traditional path to this moment.

Heidenreich in particular faced a challenging recruiting process during the COVID-affected cycle, when opportunities were limited and exposure was scarce.

"He was largely ignored during that phase," David recalled. "But he just kept working and that's been his approach the whole time."

That persistence eventually paid off, earning him a chance at the next level and reinforcing a lesson that has defined both players' journeys.

"I'm happy for him because he's being rewarded for the effort," David said. "It's deserved."

A hometown moment

When the call came -- an NFL opportunity with the hometown Steelers -- the reaction was emotional for everyone involved.

"Pure joy," David said. "As a parent, there's nothing more you want than to see your child realize their dreams."

Palko felt it too. "I was holding back tears," he said. "You see the joy, the pride in the family and all the things that went into it."

For Tecza, the moment carried an extra layer of meaning.

"The first person I told was Eli," he said with a laugh.

Still representing home

Back in Mt. Lebanon, the community has rallied around both players, just as it did during their championship run.

"The level of support has been astounding," David said. "We have nothing but gratitude."

That support hasn't gone unnoticed by Tecza.

"It's extremely supportive in Lebo -- coaches, teachers, people I haven't talked to in years," he said. "That's just fuel for us."

Both players understand what their journey represents for younger athletes watching from the same fields they once played on.

"Chase your dreams," Tecza said. "It's possible. Even from a small town as an

under-recruited player. Just work hard and it'll work out."

A story still being written

What happens next is uncertain. At press time, Tecza was fighting to earn a roster spot. Heidenreich, now drafted, faces the challenge of proving himself at the professional level with the Steelers.

But regardless of what comes next, their story has already left its mark.

"It's really unbelievable," Tecza said. "If you told me years ago we'd still be doing this together, I wouldn't believe you."

In a sport defined by competition and constant change, their journey stands out for one simple reason:

They never stopped being teammates. ♥

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Former Lebo QB Revisits Chaotic 1979 Football Season in New Memoir

“Strike Season” recounts how Mt. Lebanon players coached themselves through a teachers strike, controversy and a remarkable season Story by Sarah Core and photos by John Schisler

In a story as compelling as any sports movie, the 1979 Mt. Lebanon football season was shaped by a contentious teacher strike, negative press and on-field struggles. Mt. Lebanon graduate Michael Eck revisited that turbulent year while discussing his new memoir, “Strike Season,” before a packed crowd at the Historical Society of Mt. Lebanon on Apr. 25.

The news came as a blow. The union and the school board hadn’t been able to reach an agreement, and Mt. Lebanon teachers were striking. For football quarterback and senior Eck, the choices were stark. With teacher-coaches unable to cross the picket line, he and his co-captains were told they either needed to coach the team themselves, or they wouldn’t play at all.

“We heard the rumors and assumed it would never happen,” Eck said. “It would be like extended snow days.”

Not playing was not an option. They had one of the strongest teams Mt. Lebanon had ever seen and there were nine seniors with D1 college scholarships on the line. In fact, teammate John Frank, a 1979 All-Stater, would go pro after college and win two Super Bowl rings for the San Francisco 49ers.



Michael Eck speaking to audience as he retells the story that led to him writing “Strike Season”

“We were doing what we had to do. It was self-preservation. It was survival of the season, with no anticipation or planning,” Eck said. “There was no one holding us accountable except us.”

And his team did the unexpected. They organized their own practices, called their own plays and kept winning football games – much to the dismay of the school board. “Both the

school board and the union lost leverage because we kept winning,” Eck said.

Historical society board member Jon Delano, acting as moderator for the event, explained how the team became unwitting “pawns in the larger political game between the school board and the union.” In the end, “it took a judge to bring people back into the room to talk to each other,” he said.



Coach Art Walker and 1980 Mt. Lebanon player Paul “Swoop” Tate share a handshake and hug (known as a pound hug)

Eck said he’d always watch football movies and TV shows like Friday Night Lights, remember his own high school football career, and say, “I think we have a better story.” Finally, one of his sons told him he should write it down and turn it into a book.

“I’ve never written anything other than a couple of emails before!” Eck joked. He began contacting former teammates and coaches, uncovering a deeper story of perseverance and struggle during the six-week strike that had lasting repercussions.

“This story, this experience, impacted me throughout my life. It had a pretty profound impact on everyone,” Eck said.

“It’s a powerful reminder that growth doesn’t happen in easy times. It happens in moments of uncertainty, challenge and even adversity,” said historical society President Alyssa Jones. “The people who show up are the ones who shape lives.”

Eck, describing his teenage self as a “knucklehead,” said he and his teammates had “no appreciation for what the teachers, the coaches and the union were going through” at the time.

“There are two heroes in the book,” Eck said, pointing to former social studies

teacher Mark McCloskey and former Head Coach Art Walker, sitting in the audience. “Not me. One. Two. Right here. What you guys were able to do at this time while we muscled through, right or wrong...”

At just 29, McCloskey was thrust into the role of union chairman, having to communicate with the teachers, the union, the school board and the media in one of the most contentious strikes in the area. Eck said, “he was doing extraordinary things for the union that had never been done before.”

“Back then Mt. Lebanon was notorious for paying low salaries with little benefits,” Eck said. The school board brought in a “big time” union buster from Pittsburgh to negotiate for them.

“He was gonna teach the teachers a lesson and we ended up on strike for six weeks,” added Walker. “It should have been six hours. The teachers needed a raise and they [the school board] knew it. It was hell to make a living on a teacher’s salary.”

As for Walker, he found every action as a coach placed under a microscope. He had to resort to subterfuge to speak to his students, using intermediaries



Coach Art Walker laughing with moderator Jon Delano and author Michael Eck during the Q&A at the packed event

like a priest at St. Bernard’s Church to arrange meet ups in a safe place.

Eck gave a colorful recounting of how he and his teammates sneaked over to Walker’s house, located in neighboring Baldwin Township, during the strike. It was being guarded by a Mt. Lebanon police cruiser parked out front, sent by either the school board or the union. They parked two blocks away, then crawled through backyards and climbed over fences to get to Walker’s home.

It was a real “one if by land, two if by sea” moment, Eck said. At one point, he and teammate Tim “Sully” Sullivan stood there in the dark, arguing about which

house was Coach’s before the backyard lights flashed, letting them know which garage to go into.

“I’ll never be disloyal to the union, but I’ll never abandon this team,” Eck recalls Walker telling the players.

Walker’s attempt to help the team led to him being outed in a Pittsburgh Press article for wearing a mic to talk to the spotter on the field. It was during their winning game against archrival Upper St. Clair. After the game a reporter caught Eck off-guard and the quote he gave him made it clear Walker was still communicating with the team. The administrators had to go before the school board to

Continued on page 16



Teacher and former strike chairman Mark McClokey, Coach Art Walker, Michael Eck

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Memoir

Continued from page 15
convince them nothing un-
toward was going on.
"He made me look
like a liar. It was really an
achievement against an
archival and I remember
picking up the paper the
next day and it made me
really look bad," Eck said.
"And then I was really wor-
ried I had put the season at
risk because of what I said
and did."
Eck said when the strike
ended, he let out a big sigh
of relief. "I couldn't wait to

get yelled at and get told
what to do again."
The book event at times
felt like an Old Home Week
reunion, as teammates
reminisced about old
games and bantered about
which season had the best
team. "The talent was just
unbelievable on that team,"
Walker said.
Sully, gesturing with a
beer, described how they
had to cross the picket line to
practice on the football field
and were called "scabs" by
their own teachers. Sully
and Eck remembered how

the USC coach went toe-to-
toe with them in the huddle
prior to the game to tell them
they were "ruining lives"
by playing and encouraged
them to quit.
"We flipped the coin
and said, "let's go kick their
ass," Eck told the engaged
crowd.
Paul Tate recounted a
fight on the field where he
ripped his helmet off in an-
ger and Eck admitted there
was one practice where he
was being "a showboat" and
his teammate, Tom Scanlan,
"the Human Bowling Ball,"

took him out with a flip to
teach him a lesson.
"The best part of this
project has been connect-
ing with the larger group
[of former teammates] on
a deeper level," Eck said.
"I say the same thing about
Coach Walker. What a gift to
be able to reconnect again."
The talk was punctu-
ated by the arrival of new
Mt. Lebanon Head Coach
Bruce Fronk, returning from
the NFL Draft. With him he
carried the school's draft
football, featuring the names
of former Mt. Lebo NFL

draftees. Then it was an-
nounced that 2022 graduate
Eli Heidenreich had been
drafted by the Pittsburgh
Steelers and the room
erupted in cheers.
All proceeds from book
sales will benefit the non-
profit STEER for Student
Athletes, co-founded by Eck,
which provides mentorship
to support high school stu-
dent athletes from challeng-
ing circumstances.
Preorders of "Strike
Season" are available now
at: <https://tinyurl.com/Strike-Season> ♥



President Alyssa Jones introduces Michael Eck



Coach Art Walker gestures as he tells a story to teacher and former strike chairman Mark McCloskey with Michael Eck and Jon Delano listening

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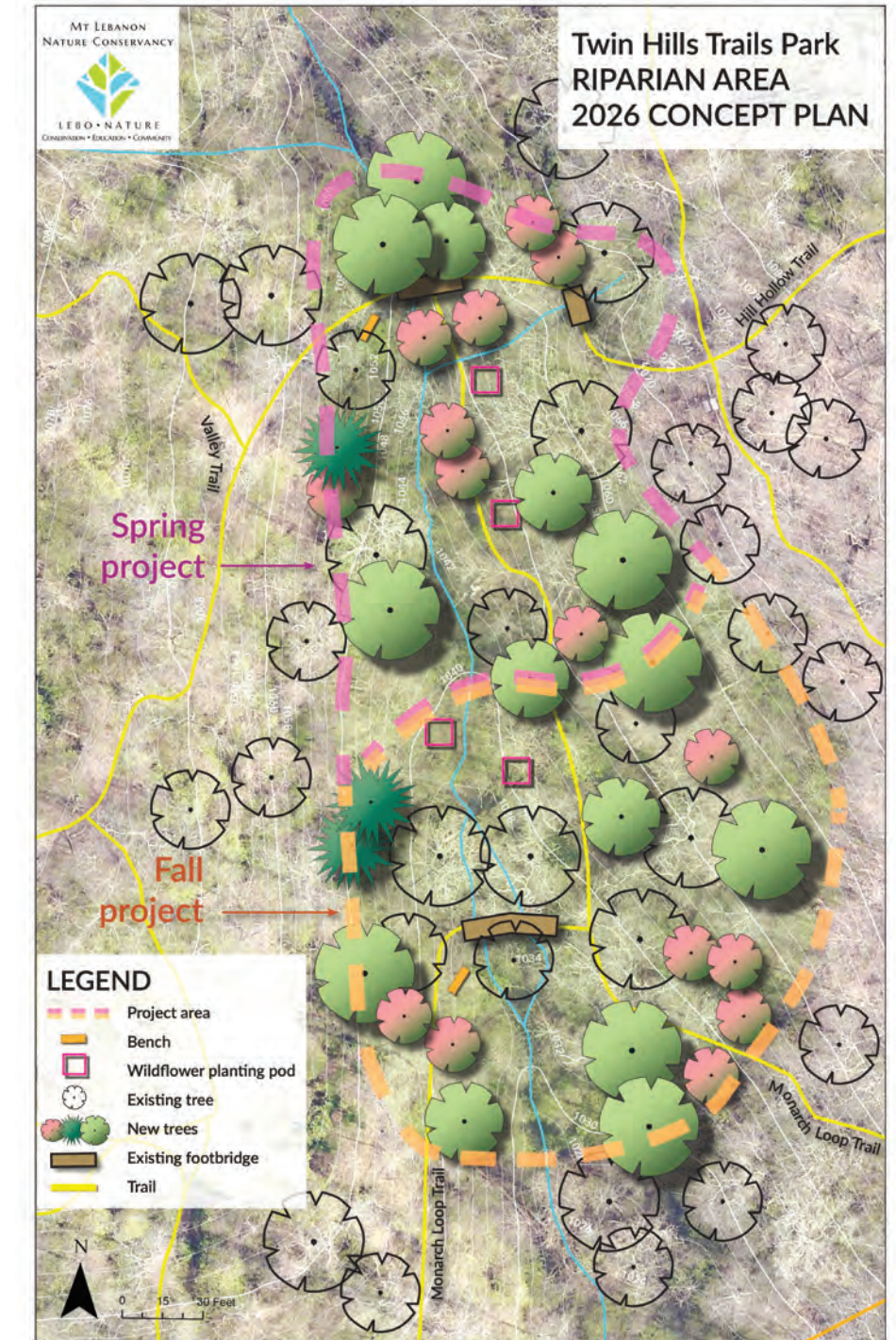
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Twin Hills Trails *Continued from page 1*

member and landscape architect Elaine Kramer, who spearheaded the grant-writing effort alongside Vice President of Projects Ron Block. "It makes it possible to get this project done in the park."
The riparian area — meaning streamside or riverbank — is located in the center of the park, with Hill Hollow Trail and the Monarch Loop Trail running through it. A healthy, biodiverse riparian helps filter pollutants, reduce erosion and create a natural buffer while also providing important habitat for wildlife.
"It's really important in ecology to repair riparian zones because you will have cleaner water, less erosion and cooler water, too," Kramer said. "It really diversifies the woodland, which is great for insects, animals and people. All of these animals are able to thrive in environments where native plants thrive."
Twin Hills was designated a Natural Heritage Area in 2021 due to the presence of two rare snail species: the Maryland Glyph and Armed Snaggletooth. According to LeboNature, preserving the park's natural landscape is crucial to the survival of the mollusks.
The restoration project is already halfway complete. During early spring, volunteers removed three invasive species — Japanese honeysuckle, privet and dou-
ble-file viburnum — and replaced

them with 58 species native to Western Pennsylvania.
In April and May, volunteers from LeboNature, Bower Hill Community Church and Scouting America Troop 22 planted 47 trees, 147 shrubs, 164 perennials and 10 pounds of native grasses and wildflowers. Species added to the landscape include Kentucky coffeetrees, umbrella magnolias, shortleaf pines, Eastern wahoo shrubs and winterberry.
"We love to have people volunteer to come help," Kramer said. "We get a lot of first-time volunteers, and we enjoy teaching them how to plant trees and shrubs correctly. Whatever knowledge level they bring, we love to help them."
The group plans to complete the second half of the riparian restoration project this fall by adding additional native species to continue rebuilding the ecosystem. Funding also has been allocated to install four new benches along the trails for visitors enjoying the restored natural space.
"People who visit the woods often take great comfort in nature — they feel restored and renewed in the woods," Kramer said. "In the coming months and years, they will see again what Pennsylvania woods are supposed to look like."
To learn more about the riparian project or volunteer opportunities, visit LeboNature. ♥



Twin Hills Riparian Project 2026

Spring planting totals	(2) Swamp white oak	(40) Buttonbush	(32) Christmas fern
(Planted along stream bank and nearby hillsides)	(3) Chestnut oak	(25) Sandbar willow	(50) Clustered mountain mint
	(1) Sycamore	(25) Red osier dogwood	(32) Leavenworth sedge
Trees (46 trees, 18 species)	(3) Bitternut hickory	(25) Silky dogwood	10 lbs native grass and wildflower mix (29 native species within the mix)
(2) Silver maple	(2) Shagbark hickory	(25) Elderberry	
(1) Red maple	(2) Redbud		
	(2) Hackberry		
	(1) White dogwood		
	(1) Kentucky coffeetree		
	(1) Umbrella magnolia		
	(3) Blackgum		
	(5) Shortleaf pine		
	(3) Eastern hoptree		
		Shrubs (includes plugs and live stakes)	
		(147 plants, 8 species)	
		(2) Eastern wahoo	
		(3) Winterberry	
		(2) Black chokeberry	
		Perennials (164 plants, 4 species)	
		(50) Golden ragwort	

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Lebo Gift Gals

Your guide to gift giving — *Baby Gifts*



From left: Jennifer Brandenstein and Karin Smith, owners of Barefoot Stitches & Gifts on Beverly Road. (Photo provided)

Similar to Dear Abby or Ask Ann Landers, "Dear Gift Gals" is where we love helping you discover thoughtful gifts for all occasions. In this edition, we're sharing ideas for one of life's greatest joys — welcoming a precious baby into the world. We're here for all the celebrations that come with little ones, including gender reveals, baby showers, push gifts, baby arrival gifts and baptisms.

Here at Barefoot Stitches, we are generationally known for THE hooded baby towel. It fits children from 8 months to 8 years old and makes such a wonderful gift, especially when embroidered with the child's name. It has become a favorite baby gift in Lebo, and friends often fight over who gets to give it. Fortunately, having more than one is never a problem — think pool, beach and bath.

Some other great gifts to celebrate babies include:

- Personalized lovies featuring a sweet animal head attached to a satin-trimmed blanket

- Clean baby skincare products that work for the whole family
- Precious stuffies and cuddly warmies perfect for snuggling
- Cute outfits in sizes 3-12 months for when baby is out and about
- Adorable piggy banks customized by a talented hand-letterer
- Elegant baby blankets and quilts that pair beautifully with embroidered birth dates
- Knit "Cuddle + Kind" dolls that help mark each month of growth in photos
- Vinyl-lettered buckets filled with diapers and wipes
- Cheeky silicone bibs guaranteed to bring smiles

We love when readers are part of the conversation, so please send your gifting questions or topic ideas to info@lebobeat.com.

Your Lebo Gift Gals are Karin Smith and Jen Brandenstein, owners of Barefoot Stitches & Gifts on Beverly Road. ♥

Bark Beat

Celebrating Mt. Lebanon's beloved dogs



Ruby Rose (left) and Lucy May are both Brittany's. (Photos provided)

Meet Ruby Rose and Lucy May!

Favorite humans? We absolutely love our family! They are the best and spoil us with love, treats, and lots of hugs and pets.

Favorite treat? We love our Blue Buffalo chewy treats, and Ruby loves her Dentastix when she wakes up.

Favorite toy? Ruby loves her dino and Lamb Chop stuffies, and Lucy loves her tennis balls and Lamb Chop stuffie.

Favorite thing to do besides eat and sleep? We LOVE running in the woods, hunting with Dad and Grandpa, and going to the beach to run and swim in Lake Erie.

Why do my humans think we are special? It's never a dull moment with us around! We bring so much joy, love and laughter to the Binek household. We also give the BEST snuggles to everyone, too.

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



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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.

Hi, I recently completed my taxes, and I owed a significant amount more than I was expecting. Is there anything that I can do to make sure that this doesn't happen again?"

-Chris Kowalski

Hi Chris, thank you for your question. Having to write a surprise check to the IRS is something that nobody ever wants to do. The good news is that, in many cases, this can be avoided with proactive planning throughout the year – not just during tax filing season.

One of the biggest reasons people end up with an unexpected tax bill is because their income changes during the year, but their tax withholding does not adjust accordingly. Perhaps you received a bonus, exercised stock options, sold investments, took an IRA withdrawal or simply earned more than you did the previous year. Even retirees run into this issue more often than people realize.

Another challenge is that not all income is taxed, or withheld, in the same way. Bonuses, investment income, pensions, Social Security benefits and retirement account withdrawals can all have different withholding rules. Sometimes not enough taxes are automatically withheld, and people don't realize there's an issue until tax season arrives.

We also see situations where quarterly tax estimates were based on the prior year's income using IRS "safe harbor" rules.

While that approach could help taxpayers avoid penalties, it does not necessarily mean they won't owe additional taxes if their income increased during the year. That is why it's important to communicate major income changes to both your CPA and financial advisor before year-end rather than after the fact.

Investment accounts can also surprise people at tax time. Many investors assume they only pay taxes when they sell something, but that is not always the case. Mutual funds, for example, can generate taxable gains even if you never sold a single share. That is why where you hold your investments can matter just as much as what you are invested in. Ultimately, it's not just about what you earn, but also about what you get to keep after taxes.

On the flip side, overwithholding can also be an issue. While receiving a large refund may feel good in the spring, it often means you gave the IRS an interest-free loan throughout the year instead of keeping that money working for you month to month.

To help avoid another surprise next tax season, consider these suggestions:

- Keep your CPA and advisor updated on income changes.
- Review investment-related tax exposure before year-end.
- Adjust withholding or estimated tax payments proactively throughout the year.

Tax planning works best when it's an ongoing process rather than a once-a-year conversation during filing season. Small adjustments made throughout the year can often make a meaningful difference when tax time arrives.

If you would like to have your question answered in a future edition of Lebo Financial Answers, email Pittsburgh@carsonwealth.com.

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

96-Year-Old Time Capsule

Continued from page 1



Geoff Hurd (left) and Reverend Noah Evans (right) removed the time capsule from the cornerstone prior to summer renovations. (Photo provided)

building was erected and the time capsule was created to symbolize the era in which St. Paul's was first established in the community.

The capsule itself is made of copper and, though oxidized, was completely intact when retrieved from the building. Its lid slides off easily, according to Hurd, and although he is unaware of the capsule's contents, he could hear papers rustling inside. That suggests the items within the copper capsule remained relatively unharmed despite spending 96 years sealed inside a wall.

The Rev. Noah Evans has served as rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church since 2017 and sees the discovery as an opportunity to connect the church's past with its present.

"Our community's history has brought us to where we are today and can help us understand how we are called to serve the local community today and in the future," Evans said.

History appeared to repeat itself when members of St. Paul's created a separate time capsule just one year before the discovery of the 1930 capsule. Church members were unaware of the original container hidden within the walls when they assembled a second capsule intended to be opened in 2124.

The newly created time capsule will find a permanent location following

renovations planned for the building this summer, and Hurd said he plans to clearly mark its location to ensure it is not overlooked in the future.

Had Hurd not been researching historical documents for the church's anniversary, the cornerstone concealing the copper box likely would have remained hidden and become even more inaccessible following planned exterior additions, including railings.

Hurd shares a similar perspective with Evans. Both believe the capsules represent more than preserved artifacts — they symbolize the importance of passing culture, history and values from one generation to the next.

"Let's leave something for the people who come after us so they understand what was important to us," Hurd said.

Evans stressed the importance of using these milestones as reminders of the church community's broader purpose. He said church members have used both the recent anniversary celebration and the future capsule opening as opportunities for reflection.

"History is not just about the past," Evans said. "It is the soil from which our present has grown. At St. Paul's, our story has been shaped by generations of people who built a church not just of bricks and mortar, but of mission and meaning." ♥



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