



A lost pilot lands at Arlington

Ray Plevyak was born to fly. As a boy, he dreamed of earning his wings and soaring above the clouds. At 22, he was an Air Force pilot at war in the skies over North Korea. Second Lt. Plevyak flew his final combat mission March 1, 1952. His F-51D Mustang hit by anti-aircraft fire, Ray crashed near Pyongyang. Search and rescue flights found no wreckage or remains. No evidence suggested he was taken as a prisoner of war. On Dec. 31, 1953, he was officially declared “Missing in Action” and presumed dead. To family, friends and a fiancée back home in Whites Cross-ing, Ray vanished into thin air. Nearly 75 years after he disappeared, Raymond Thad-deus Plevyak, posthumously promoted to first lieutenant, will receive a marker at Arlington National Cemetery on Oct. 23, his sister’s 105th birthday. Helen Mongelia plans to be there, alongside her daughters, Patricia Munley and Elaine Zavoico, and a group of family and friends from the Carbon-dale area and across the country. The ceremony will close a long, painful tour of duty for Ray’s generations of survivors. In a phone interview, I asked Patricia whether Arlington ceremony will bring a sense of closure, especially to her mother, who lost her younger brother almost three-quarters of a century ago. “I asked her about that, how she felt about the service and how he’s going to be memorial-ized there,” said Patricia, who now lives in Arizona with Kevin Munley, her husband of 45 years. “She’s really happy about that, but she said she wished it never happened, that he had come home safe, so it’s a double-edged sword for her. She’s really happy that this is taking place, but there’s that sadness, too.” Ray was the second-young-est of 11 children. Six of them served in uniform, including a sister who was a Navy nurse. Kevin Munley was a Marine fighter pilot and retired a lieu-tenant colonel. Families like this have been the backbone of the American military since the Revolution. The pain such families feel over loved ones lost in war is generational, a part of their DNA. Patricia never knew her Uncle Ray, but she has felt his loss deeply all her life. In 2017, she and Kevin visited South Korea in a program organized by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). “It was an amazing experi-ence,” Patricia said. “The South

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Kosierowski hopes to pass EpiPen bill

Legislation would require auto-injectors at daycares

By Jessica Delfino JDelfino@SCRANTONTIMES.COM

A boy died at daycare in 2017 after being fed a grilled cheese sandwich, despite a dairy allergy. One area lawmaker hopes to prevent that from ever happen-ing again. This is only one of many stories motivating state Rep. Bridget Kosierowski, D-114, Waverly Twp., to propose legislation to require epinephrine auto-injectors, also known as EpiPens, on hand in all daycares across the state. Kosierowski will join Vice Pres-ident of Advocacy and Policy for



Elijah Silvera: Died in 2017 after he was fed a grilled cheese sandwich at his daycare facility

the Asthma and Allergy Founda-tion of America Jenna Riemen-schneider and others at a news conference Monday to share statistics and explain why avail-able resources are vital. Additionally, Dina Silvera will be on hand to tell her story. In 2017, her son, Elijah, died at his daycare facility after he was fed a grilled cheese sandwich, though

the staff was made aware that he was allergic to dairy products. According to MayoClinic.org, anaphylaxis is a severe and often life-threatening allergic reaction that can occur only seconds after exposure to something a person may be allergic to, such as bee stings, peanuts, milk or shellfish. Food allergies are the No. 1 cause of anaphylaxis for children. During this health emergency, the immune system releases chemicals that can send a body into shock, lower blood pressure suddenly, narrow airways and block the ability to breathe. Other symptoms may include a fast, weak pulse, a skin rash, nausea and vomiting. Anaphylaxis must be treated immediately via epinephrine, or it can be deadly. Current state laws do not require daycares to maintain a supply of epinephrine auto-in-jectors on location. Legislation partially spon-sored by Kosierowski, a registered nurse for 30 years, will require day cares to obtain prescriptions for and maintain a constant supply of epinephrine auto-injectors, as well as train staff appropriately. “While current Pennsylvania law requires facility employees and agents to receive training, this legislation will further strengthen the law to require training for

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Hexagon Project Director Elizabeth Burkhauser takes time for a “thumbs up” with Hector Rojas, a third-grader who participated in the Hexagon Project, on Saturday at the Artworks Gallery & Studio in Scranton. PHOTOS BY GERI GIBBONS/STAFF PHOTO

A CALL FOR PEACE THROUGH ART

Hexagon Project art exhibit aims to improve the shape of things

By Geri Gibbons GGIBBONS@SCRANTONTIMES.COM

SCRANTON — A locally based international project focuses on the spirit of unity reflected in interconnecting artwork created by people across the world. The Hexagon Project, in its 18th year, promotes interdepen-dence and the idea that everyone is connected. On Saturday, dozens of people made their way to the Artworks Gallery & Studio to view beautiful, hexagon-shaped artwork created by student, community and inter-

national artists. Aptly, this year’s theme was “peace” and each colorful hexa-gon represented an interpretation of that peace, which ranged from an understanding of the customs of other countries to personal peace, which comes from positive relationships. It was held as part of the United Nations International Day of Peace, also officially known as World Peace Day. Elizabeth Burkhauser, Hexa-gon Project director, said art is a wonderful way to make a differ-



Artwork by third-grader Nicholas Tokach from the Wyoming Valley Montessori School in Kingston is displayed at the Artworks Gallery & Studio in Scranton. The artwork was part of the Hexagon Project, which this year focused on peace.

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Running in heels: Paint the Planet Pink events kick off in Scranton



Paint the Planet Pink kicked off its signature events Saturday with the 11th annual Color Me Pink 5K and fun walk and the Gentlemen’s Dash in Scranton. This is the first year the events were held in Scranton. Paint the Planet Pink is a collaborative effort to bring the community together to support a cure for all cancers through research and clinical trials. For information and future events, visit paintthepianetpink.org. Above, participants in the Paint the Planet Pink Gentlemen’s Dash run in the 500 block of Linden Street in downtown Scranton. CHRISTOPHER DOLAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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OVERDOSE

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problems which include health issues, homelessness and mental health conditions, she said. She also carries a supply of tents, blankets, water and snacks.

Keefe develops friendships with those she serves. They trust her. Now, she's taking help to those who need it armed with information, inspiration and supplies.

OPIOID DEATHS TICK DOWNWARD

Lackawanna County District Attorney Mark Powell partly attributes the reduction in overdose deaths to the availability of Narcan and diversionary programs which help addicts get into treatment. Helping addicts get clean and sober is consistent with the mission of his office, he said.

“We know we couldn't arrest our way out of the drug problem,” he said. “So, we support recovery

to avoid the revolving door of people continuing to commit crimes to support their drug habit.”

Powell also co-chairs the Lackawanna Recovery Coalition, which makes naloxone nasal spray available on request. He said the drug gives a second chance to those who might otherwise die. Powell said he's seen people who have been revived by a dose of the drug, some several times, go on to live productive lives and become assets to their families.

He stresses his office provides assistance to addicts who hope to get sober, but it vigorously prosecutes drug dealers and traffickers who profit from making the drugs available.

September is National Recovery Month and a fine time to recognize and support those in recovery, as well as to provide support and education, he said.

A Recovery Walk and Celebration Sunday at Nay Aug Park is an example of the community coming together to support those

in recovery and to reduce the stigma associated with addiction, he said.

SECOND CHANCES

Frank Bolock of the Recovery Bank and CEO of Treatment Court Advocacy Center of Lackawanna County, knows what it's like to get a second chance.

Sober for over 30 years, Bolock credits his long-term sobriety to family and friends and his commitment to helping others achieve the recovery. Professionally, sobriety has afforded him the opportunity to continue a successful law practice in Scranton.

On his first trip through rehab years ago, Bolock was sober for a time. After relapsing, he again went through rehab and is blessed with long-term sobriety, he said.

Although opponents argue the use of Narcan is a waste of money on someone who doesn't value their own life, Bolock points out that the medicine simply provides another chance.

Over the years, options for recovery have expanded

to include medically assisted treatment, SMART recovery (Self-Management and Recovery Training), the use of Narcan and drug testing strips, in addition to more traditional 12-step programs.

The Recovery Bank, established by Treatment Court Advocacy Center, serves as a bridge to those who have stopped using drugs, either voluntarily or under court order. The Recovery Bank provides a variety of activities and support for a better life, Bolock said.

Carol Coolbaugh, of West Pittston, lost her son Erik to an overdose in 2009. Shortly after his death, she realized she wanted to help others.

She began a local chapter of Grief Recovery After Substance Passing (GRASP), a nationwide program that provides support and resources. She initiated an annual Overdose Awareness Day event at Kirby Park, inviting service organizations to set up tables and provide information about recovery

resources.

The August event includes a balloon release, with the names of those lost to overdoses written on purple balloons, which are set adrift after a family member or friend reads the name aloud.

Coolbaugh is committed to stopping the stigma surrounding addiction and provides a safe space to talk about lost loved ones.

“People need to acknowledge a sense of grief and loss they left behind, even in spite of challenges they faced during their lives,” she said.

In spite of her efforts to assist families, Coolbaugh worries about opioid use and the risks of fatal overdoses.

When the state made naloxone available to all Pennsylvania residents in 2015, she was relieved. She believed if the medication was available to the person who found her son, perhaps he would still be alive, sharing holidays with family, parenting his children and helping her at her home.

Coolbaugh said she soon realized that the standing order was misunderstood, even by pharmacists. Many family members who requested the drug from physicians or pharmacists were believed to be drug addicts themselves. What was meant to be a seamless transition to the medication's easy access wasn't.

Through her organization, Coolbaugh applied for state grants that enabled her to obtain a large quantity of naloxone. She attended multiple community events, giving out the medication and explaining its proper use. She even visited area homeless encampments, leaving several doses at each tent.

Now, when she attends community events, there are often multiple organizations giving out the life-saving drugs.

“I hope I've helped to stop the stigma of addiction,” she said. “To let those struggling with addiction know that there is hope.”

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A steelworker moves a 155 mm M795 artillery projectile during the manufacturing process at the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant on April 13, 2023. **ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE**

UKRAINE

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They are used in howitzer systems, which are towed large guns with long barrels that can fire at various angles. Howitzers can strike targets up to 15 miles to 20 miles away and are highly valued by ground forces to take out enemy targets from a protected distance.

Ukraine has already received more than 3 million of the 155 mm shells from the U.S.

With the war now well into its third year, Zelenskyy has been pushing the U.S. for permission to use longer range missile systems to fire deeper inside of Russia.

So far he has not persuaded the Pentagon or White House to loosen those restrictions.

The Defense Department has emphasized that Ukraine can already hit Moscow with Ukrainian-produced drones, and there is hesitation on the strategic implications of a U.S.-made missile potentially striking the

Russian capital.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that Russia would be “at war” with the United States and its NATO allies if they allow Ukraine to use the long-range weapons.

At one point in the war, Ukraine was firing between 6,000 and 8,000 of the 155 mm shells per day. That rate started to deplete U.S. stockpiles and drew concern that the level on hand was not enough to sustain U.S. military needs if another major conventional war broke out, such as in a potential conflict over Taiwan.

In response the U.S. has invested in restarting production lines and is now manufacturing more than 40,000 155 mm rounds a month, with plans to hit 100,000 rounds a month. During his visit, Zelenskyy is expected meet and thank workers who have increased production of the 155 mm rounds over the past year.

Two of the Pentagon leaders who have pushed that increased production through — Doug Bush, assistant secretary of the Army

for acquisition, logistics and technology and Bill LaPlante, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer — are also expected to join Zelenskyy at the plant, as is Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro.

The 155 mm rounds are just one of the scores of ammunition, missile, air defense and advanced weapons systems the U.S. has provided Ukraine — everything from small arms bullets to advanced F-16 fighter jets. The U.S. has been the largest donor to Ukraine, providing more than \$56 billion of the more than \$106 billion NATO and partner countries have collected to aid in its defense.

Even though Ukraine is not a member of NATO, commitment to its defense is seen by many of the European nations as a must to keep Putin from further military aggression that could threaten bordering NATO-member countries and result in a much larger conflict.

Associated Press writer Aamer Madhani contributed to this report.

HEXAGON

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ence and connect with others.

The hexagon shape is especially important because it seems destined to become part of something bigger, she said.

Hector Rojas, 9, a third-grade student at Kistler Elementary, proudly showed off his award winning artwork that depicted him giving a “thumbs up” in the midst of several area landmarks, including a waterfall and walking trail.

Rojas is part of the SHINE afterschool program of Luzerne County, which partnered the Earth Conservancy and the Hexagon Project to oversee participants creation of the hexagon shaped pieces of artwork.

Angela Rojas said she was very proud of her son and grateful that he is able

to participate in the SHINE program.

Rojas also said she was impressed with Scranton, especially the neighborhood that surrounds the gallery.

“It's beautiful here,” she said.

Elizabeth Hughes, of the Earth Conservancy, led the SHINE art project, which focused on reclaiming scarred areas of the Earth.

Hughes pointed out that youngsters are more likely to “think out of the box” and come up with creative uses for outdoor areas.

Kristin Ferretti, who recently moved to New Jersey from Mountain Top, traveled back to the area for an opportunity to see the exhibit.

Ferretti, whose children attended Wyoming Valley Montessori School before the move, said the concept of both inward and outward peach is an integral part of the Montessori philosophy.

Over 100 Montessori School students, ranging in age from 2 to 12, participated in the project with students overlaying their handprint on the word for “peace” in different languages from across the world.

Dee Tersteeg, a member of the Hexagon Project board of directors, was happy to see so many people come out to enjoy the artwork done by area students and by artists across the world.

Among her favorites pieces of artwork was a depiction of dove holding of an olive branch which looked like a puzzle. The last piece of the puzzle seemed to be ready for placement in the center of the piece and it held a simple heart.

“We focus on social justice,” she said. “On peace.”

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