

### Remembering Pearl Harbor

101-year-old veteran to attend ceremony in Hawaii

PAGE A4



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**18 DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS**

# The Leader-Herald

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RYAN LOREY PHOTO

Empire Ambulance General Manager Dave Lavergne, left, Salvation Army of Fulton County Captain Wendy Lorey, Bella Romano, a youth volunteer from Mayfield and Jessica Romano, owner of the Romano Acro Dance Academy in Johnstown, pose for a photo to help promote this year's Salvation Army of Fulton County Christmas Toy Drive.

## FULTON COUNTY

### Donations sought for Toy Drive

Salvation Army says gifts are needed for infants, older children

BY JASON SUBIK  
The Leader-Herald

The 5th Annual Salvation Army of Fulton County Christmas Toy Drive is facing a specific need for toys for children ages 10 and up and for infants up to 3 years of age.

Toy drive coordinator Ryan Lorey, who also operates the Fulton County Area News Facebook page, has helped distribute about 50 toy collection boxes throughout Fulton and Montgomery counties over the past few weeks.

"There is no Salvation Army in Montgomery County, so the Salvation Army helps out in

Montgomery now from up here in Fulton County," Lorey said. "A lot of our toys will help out kids in Montgomery County too."

Lorey on Sunday described what he's seen this year so far for the annual toy collection effort.

"We typically don't get stuff for kids 10 and up, it's challenging to get for that age, and at the moment we have nothing in stock," Lorey said. "And baby stuff too. There's stuff people could buy for babies, and we have a hard time getting baby items as well, and people can donate infant clothes and food too, not just toys."

Capt. Wendy Senior, the commanding officer of the Salvation

Army of Fulton County, said during the 2020 Christmas season her organization helped 388 families in Fulton and Montgomery counties, helping to donate an average of five to six toys each for 506 children. She said the toy drive also includes opportunities to donate food, but so far this year the Salvation Army is seeing fewer total families expressing need, which she attributes to increases in the amount of money available through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), more availability of food at food pantries and additional muss food drops.

"Last year, there were a lot of

people who were just food, and no toys involved, and that would be a lot of seniors or single people or homeless," she said. "This year we're seeing more people come to us and saying 'I don't need food. I need toys. I need gifts for my children.' We see a trend in that direction."

Lorey said the toy drive effort uses the Salvation Army's "Angel Tree Program" to help identify the needs of the community. He said participating locations in the two counties have "Angel Tree Tags," which are paper tags that can be hung on Christmas

See TOYS, page A2

## GLOVERSVILLE

### Plan to establish shelter stymied

BY JASON SUBIK  
The Leader-Herald

Mayor Vince DeSantis says his administration's plan to spend \$200,000 from the city's \$1.5 million in federal American Rescue Plan funding to retrofit a building in the city into a suitable shelter for homeless men and women can't go forward unless the Fulton County Board of Supervisors is willing to apply for a permanent state funding stream to operate the facility.

DeSantis in October put forward his plan for how to spend the \$1.5 million in federal funding, which included spending \$200,000 to bring an existing building in Gloversville in "a location appropriately zoned" up to the standards of the city's current building codes, or to build a new building, to establish a central large dormitory facility for homeless men and women.

"That can't be done unless ongoing, annual, operating expenses are covered," DeSantis said. "So, we don't have that yet. This is something we've set aside money for, but it's not feasible to do at this time. There is the potential for getting state money for operating expenses, but that's something the county Board of Supervisors does not want to apply for, and it has to be applied for by the county. That is one of the roadblocks, because that is one of the possible sources for ongoing funding."

Rev. Richard Wilkinson, leader of the Free Methodist Church of Gloversville, said he and DeSantis have different visions for how a homeless shelter could be established in Fulton County. DeSantis has said he wants a permanent location for a shelter, while Wilkinson has proposed 33 Bleeker St., the former YWCA, as a place where a Code Blue temporary homeless shelter could be established during nights when the temperature goes below 32 degrees.

The Free Methodist Church has filed a lawsuit against Gloversville seeking to overturn a prohibition against Code Blue shelters in the city's "Downtown Form-based overlay district," which includes 33 Bleeker St. Wilkinson said the city of Gloversville has not yet "answered" the lawsuit, and has instead asked the court system for time extensions.

See SHELTER, page A2

## Biden touts savings on insulin, other drugs for Americans

BY RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden pledged Monday that his social agenda legislation would deliver tangible savings on prescription drugs for all Americans. Relief that consumers have clamored for is now in sight, he asserted.

But first the bill has to pass Congress, where plenty of obstacles remain in its path.

Biden tried to shift the focus to pocketbook provisions overlooked in the political machinations over his \$2 trillion legislation, which deals with issues from climate to family life and taxes. Even before concerns over rising inflation, polls consistently showed support from Americans across the political spectrum for government action to lower drug costs.

"It's safe to say that all of us can

agree that prescription drugs are outrageously expensive in this country," Biden said at the White House.

"I'm committed to using every tool I have to lower prescription drug costs for Americans consistent with the drug companies getting a fair return on their investment," he added.

But even if Biden and his fellow Democrats succeed in their final push to pass the legislation, a major political difficulty awaits them: Dividends from their prescription drug provisions won't show up right away, while the pain of rising costs is real and present. Democrats will have to point to promised, not actual, savings in next year's mid-term elections.

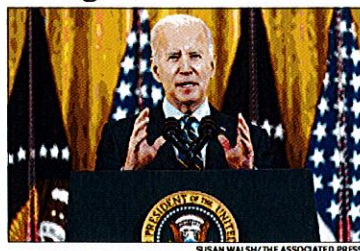
The biggest policy change — a system for Medicare to negotiate prices for prescription drugs —

won't begin to deliver lower costs until 2025, and then only for a selected set of 10 medicines, as well as insulin products. The number of drugs subject to negotiations would build with time, reaching 100 in six years and continuing to grow by 30 a year.

Other provisions would take effect earlier.

• Copays for insulin would be limited to \$35 a month, starting in 2023. Biden called the high cost of insulin "one of the most egregious examples" of overpriced medicines. He was introduced at the White House by a young woman, Jasha Meza, who couldn't afford insulin for her Type 1 diabetes and was hospitalized in a coma.

• Drugmakers would be required to pay rebates to Medicare if they



SUSAN WALSH/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Joe Biden speaks from the East Room of the White House on Monday about his administration's plans to lower the costs of prescription drugs, letting Medicare negotiate drug prices and capping how much seniors and people with disabilities have to pay for drugs.

See DRUGS, page A2



Tuesday's Forecast - Map, Page A5  
Mostly cloudy  
High: 31 Low: 22

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I	DEAR ANNE	..... B6	LOCAL	..... A2
N	CLASSIFIED	..... B9-10	LOTTERIES	..... A5
S	COMICS	..... B6	OBITUARIES	..... A5
D	CROSSWORD	..... B6	SPORTS	..... B1-4
E	HOROSCOPE	..... B6	WEATHER	..... A5

JOHNSTOWN

# Chief: Heating unit culprit in blaze above Hot Dog Hut

BY ANDREW WAITE  
The Leader Herald

In a third-floor apartment on Main Street in Johnstown Thursday evening, a gas space heater came into contact with drapes, igniting a fire, according to Johnstown Fire Chief Bruce Heberer. Fast action limited the damage of the fire that occurred above the Hot Dog Hut Cafe, containing the

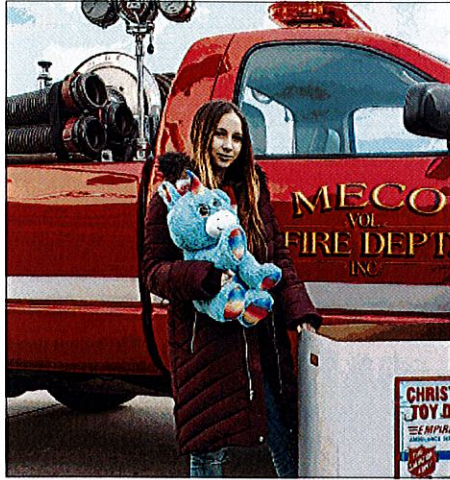
flames to one room, Heberer said. However, the third-floor apartment and the second-floor apartment are not currently habitable, and the Hot Dog Hut had yet to reopen as of Monday, Heberer said. The residents of both apartments were home at the time of the fire, but no one was injured, Heberer said. Two cats, one from each apartment, were also

rescued, according to the fire chief. Josh Brinkman, who works at Palmer Pharmacy next door to the Hot Dog Hut, said he was at work at about 6:30 p.m. when a man came into the pharmacy to tell him about the third-story blaze. "I went outside, and sure enough there was a fire. Flames were coming out the window," Brinkman said. "The police and firemen

were awesome. They got there quick, put it out quick and limited the damage." Heberer said the third-floor apartment sustained smoke and fire damage, while the second-floor apartment sustained water damage. He also credited the building's sprinkler system with helping to contain the blaze. He said neither apartment was "totally destroyed" but said "huge cleanup" is necessary.

Meanwhile, the Hot Dog Hut's voicemail said the eatery would be closed until Monday or Tuesday, but "we will reopen sometime next week [meaning the week of Monday, Dec. 6]." Heberer said Thursday's fire is a good reminder that heating units must be kept

a safe distance from drapes and other objects that can catch on fire. "You've got to keep the combustibles at least 18 inches away," he said. "The wind can blow. Anything can happen." Andrew Waite can be reached at [awaiter@dailygazette.net](mailto:awaiter@dailygazette.net) and at 518-417-9338. Follow him on Twitter @UpstateWaite.



Jalden Farrington, a youth volunteer for the Toy Drive from Broadalbin, poses for a photo with the Mecco fire truck.

## Toys

Continued from page A1

Trees which contain a specific child's ID number, first name, age, gender, clothing sizes, and Christmas wish items. The tag has all the necessary information a sponsor needs to purchase the gifts for his/her assigned child. Lorey said after four years of organizing the toy drive, the Salvation Army of Fulton County has developed great knowledge of the needs of specific children in the two counties.

"We've gotten bigger and better at this every year," Lorey said. "What's nice about our program is that, while there's a lot of good toy programs out there, but what's really nice about our toy drive is that we know who these kids are. We know how old they are. We know the types of things that they like or need, so the kid is actually going to get stuff that they like and/or need, versus some of the other toy programs that just aim to provide toys to families."

In Fulton County some of the locations where the Salvation Army toy collection

boxes can be found include the Walmart Supercenter in Gloversville, the Fulton Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing, and three locations used by the First Choice Financial Federal Credit Union including their main branch office in Gloversville, a smaller branch inside the Walmart Supercenter and a location near the Subway shop in Vall Mills.

Lorey said the central hub for donating toys in Montgomery County is the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office in Fultonville. "They'll even go out and, if an elderly person or somebody can't get to the sheriff's office, and they want to donate a toy, they'll send a patrol car to that person's house," Lorey said.

### VOLUNTEERS STILL NEEDED FOR RED KETTLE CAMPAIGN

Another key aspect of the Salvation Army's annual Christmas season activities is the organization's 130th Red Kettle fundraising campaign. Captain Wendy Senior said each year the Salvation Army of Fulton County deploys two red kettles, one at the Price Chopper in Johnstown and the other at the Walmart

Supercenter in Gloversville, to collect money to help the needy.

Senior said in 2020 she had about 12 volunteers available to monitor the two red kettles and ring bells to help solicit donations, but so far 2021 has proven to be a more difficult year to recruit volunteers.

"I had many more people willing to volunteer on a regular basis last year — this year I have three," Senior said. "And at the same time, I have less people giving."

Senior said that although she has fewer volunteers to solicit donations, this year's edition of the Red Kettle Campaign includes the ability for people to use payment apps on their smartphones, such as Google Pay and Apple Pay, to contribute money to the campaign.

"Price Chopper will let us leave our stand up when there is no Kettle person there because people can use those payment apps to donate money, even when there isn't a person standing there," Senior said. "People can just walk up to the Kettle and just make a payment." Senior said people who are interested in volunteering should call her office at 518-725-4119.

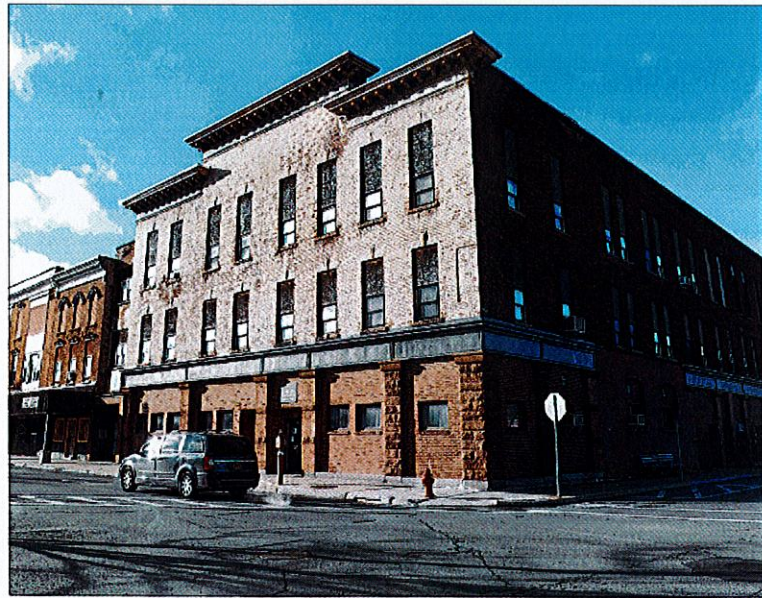
## Shelter

Continued from page A1

Wilkinson said a recent survey of homeless people conducted by the Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless [IPH] of Albany shows that, as of Nov. 1, there were 98 people Fulton County who were either homeless or have "unstable housing," which includes "couch surfers, squatters, or limited functioning house conditions." The IPH survey shows 81 of those people live in Gloversville. He said each night the temperature goes below 32 degrees and Gloversville and Fulton County continue to lack a homeless shelter, the amount of unnecessary human suffering will increase.

Wilkinson said the Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless survey has been sent to the Fulton County Board of Supervisors but he has no plans to make a presentation asking them to apply for state funding until and unless the court system rules in favor of his church's lawsuit seeking to establish 33 Bleeker Street as the "Center of Hope" Code Blue temporary shelter for Gloversville. He said if he is allowed to operate a shelter at 33 Bleeker St. he would be willing to give up any state funding the Center of Hope could receive for operating expenses, after DeSantis and the city of Gloversville establish a permanent shelter.

"If the city really wants to do [a permanent shelter], I would be willing to give the Center of Hope until the city



The former YWCA located at 33 Bleeker St. in Gloversville served as a Code Blue shelter last year.

has theirs off the ground," Wilkinson said. "What the city wants to do — I don't know — but it seems like it's a couple of years out, so I've told the mayor, I said 'Look,

let me open, until you're ready to open yours, and then I will close the doors.' He's not even willing to get people off the street now." DeSantis said solving

the problem of inadequate shelter available to homeless people is important to him, but the details need to be worked out in a way that a suitable location can

be identified in the areas of the city that allow a Code Blue temporary shelter and then a permanent funding stream to operate the facility is established. He said he will

need support from the Fulton County Board of Supervisors in order to move forward with creating a shelter.

"At this point, we're at a stand-still," DeSantis said.

## Drugs

Continued from page A1

raise prices faster than inflation, starting that same year. The provision would benefit people with private insurance as well.

Medicare recipients with high drug costs would finally get a cap on their annual financial exposure, \$2,000 starting in 2024.

Shingles vaccines and other shots covered under Medicare's "Part D" pharmacy benefit would be cost-free to consumers, starting in 2024.

The social legislation has passed the House and is

pending before the Senate, where the goal remains to pass it before Christmas.

The powerful pharmaceutical industry is maneuvering to strip out as much as possible of the prescription drug provisions, even block the entire bill. They argue that limits on their ability to set prices would stifle investment that is facts innovation.

In a statement following Biden's speech, Stephen J. Uhl, head of the industry lobby Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, said "a damaging bill jammed through a partisan process will not provide patients struggling to afford their medicines meaningful relief." But a recent overview

of the legislation from the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation found that Medicare negotiations would "put downward pressure" on premiums and out-of-pocket costs for seniors, and other provisions of the legislation would also reduce out-of-pocket costs for those who are privately insured.

A Kaiser Foundation poll from October found that more than 8 in 10 Americans favor allowing Medicare to negotiate prices, including 95% of Democrats, 82% of independents and 71% of Republicans. Most in the poll agreed with a statement that "even if U.S. prices were lower, drug companies would still make enough money to invest in the research needed

to develop new drugs."

Biden said the industry has lost the pricing debate with the American people.

Diabetes, Alzheimer's, cancer — so many other diseases. They don't care whether you are a Democrat or Republican," said Biden. "We need Congress to finish the job," he emphasized.

Core provisions of the Biden bill draw from earlier legislation that was supported by then-President Donald Trump but failed to advance. Those include the cap on out-of-pocket costs for seniors a parties on drug companies that raise prices faster than inflation.

The \$35 monthly copays were also introduced under Trump through regulation,

and are now available in a limited though growing number of Medicare prescription plans. Biden would greatly expand access and benefits.

Meanwhile, Medicare recipients are about to get an unwelcome illustration of the impact of high drug costs.

About half of next year's \$21.60 increase to Medicare's "Part B" monthly outpatient premium is due to the program's need to financially prepare for a pending coverage decision on a \$56,000-a-year Alzheimer's drug called Aduhelm. Notices have already gone out to millions of seniors telling them their cost in January will jump to \$170.10.

### Correction?

The Leader Herald is committed to accuracy and fairness. Report errors of fact to the news desk at (518) 395-3079.

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