

Woman killed  
in car crash **News, A7**

Fire damages stores at  
Peddler's Village **News, A6**

Delivering the goods  
**Food, D1**



# BUCKS COUNTY Courier Times

\$1.50 WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2016

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## Yardley Council OKs 8-mill tax increase

It's the first tax hike in the borough in 11 years.

By PEG QUANN  
STAFF WRITER

Yardley Council approved a \$3.22 million 2017 budget Tuesday night, calling for an 8-mill increase in real estate taxes to raise an additional \$240,000.

The first tax increase in 11 years amounts to a 45 percent increase in the municipal tax to 24.73 mills. A mill is \$1 for each

\$1,000 of assessed property value.

For a homeowner with a home assessed at \$30,000, the tax will increase about \$240 to \$741.90 a year, said Councilman Rich Wayne.

While the property tax increase may seem huge, Wayne noted the municipal tax accounts for only 8 percent of a homeowner's annual property tax payments, which also

include taxes paid to the Pennsbury School District and the county.

The millage increase will raise only about half of the funds that would have been raised if the borough had adopted a 1 percent earned. Residents protested and council decided Dec. 6 not to impose the tax.

Council Vice President Michael Ruttle and Councilman Uri Feiner were the only members to vote against adoption of the \$3.22

million budget that includes an approximate \$1.4 million operating budget, but Ruttle then reluctantly voted with the other five council members for the 8-mill tax increase to support the approved budget.

Voting for the budget and tax increase were Council President Katherine Cadwallader and members Jef Buehler, Byron Marshall, Ryan Berry, and Wayne.

Ruttle and Feiner said they voted against the budget because

it needed more funding for capital reserves and improvements. The borough only has \$75,000 in savings, and Ruttle said there should be at least \$150,000 set aside.

"If we have a flood, we will use it up in one sweep," he said. Improvements in the borough will not be able to continue, he said, "if we keep cutting to the bone."

Feiner said he wanted more funding for long-term capital improvement projects.

See **YARDLEY, Page A7**

### Holiday haul



PHOTOS BY WILLIAM JOHNSON / FOR THE COURIER TIMES

Tom Cimochowski, of The Rose Group, helps load toys the company collected in a holiday gift drive for kids served by the Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency. The Rose Group, of Newtown Township, is the owner and operator of some area Applebee's and Corner Bakery Cafe restaurants.

## 'Tis the season for giving

By CRISSA SHOEMAKER DEBREE  
STAFF WRITER

Nearly two dozen children who otherwise wouldn't have anything under their Christmas trees will have a merry holiday this year, thanks to a group of adults they've never met.

Brightly wrapped packages of every size left the offices of The Rose Group in Newtown Township on Dec. 6, destined for children being served by the Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency.

"We're unable to do this on our own," said Roxanne Watkins Hall, a volunteer and foster parent recruiter who oversees the annual toy drive. "We're a government agency. We're unable to provide those extra, meaningful things to families who can't do it on their own because of the crisis they're involved in."

Across the region, individual donors and companies like The Rose Group are opening their hearts — and their wallets — to support those in need during the holiday season. And this time of year is critical. Some

See **GIVING, Page A2**



Denise Horton, a case worker supervisor for the Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency, picks up toys that The Rose Group collected through its annual holiday toy drive.

### Making most of every step after crash

By MARION CALLAHAN  
STAFF WRITER

When Joel Metzger opened his eyes after a two-month coma, he was laying in a hospital bed, bandaged and barely conscious. He was 32 years old, with no concept of time and no memories of the head-on car crash that killed two people in another car and left him clinging on to life.

Everything but his mind felt lifeless, he recalled. With no ability to move or speak, he watched days in the hospital turn into weeks and then months.

"You are not in blissful ignorance — far from it," said Metzger, a Doylestown resident who is now 65.

Family and visitors told him the story of how he nearly died. Metzger's car was hit head-on on a bridge in Miami by another driver who was traveling at 85 mph. The driver and passenger in the other car were thrown from the vehicle and killed instantly.

He survived, but Metzger said there's a clear difference between surviving and thriving. He chose the latter.

He didn't know just how steep his climb would be. He said he didn't anticipate his marriage would break up, that he would lose his career as a cabinetmaker or that he would have to reinvent

See **JOY, Page A2**

### Finding JOY

A series sharing some of our neighbors' triumphs over adversity



Video online



ART GENTILE / PHOTOJOURNALIST  
Joel Metzger speaks about his life 30 years after the car crash that put him in a coma for two months and left him using a cane. He's happy he was given a second chance at life.

### Maple Point 5th-graders hold first senior soiree

By CHRIS ENGLISH  
STAFF WRITER

As fifth-graders at Neshaminy's Maple Point Middle School treated more than 250 area senior citizens to holiday music, food, conversation and hugs, the wide gap in their ages seemed to melt away like an icicle in the midday sun.

Organizers of the inaugural senior soiree held at the Middletown school Tuesday said it was designed for the generations to mingle, get to know and appreciate each other better, and just have a fun day around the holidays.

See **SOIREE, Page A7**



Maple Point Middle School fifth-graders Josh Smiler, 11, and Kaelyn Blizard, 10, interview Betty Aptaker during a holiday party for seniors in the school auditorium Tuesday in Middletown.

BILL FRASER / PHOTOJOURNALIST



42° Intervals of  
26° clouds and sun. B3

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Helping neighbors in need at the holidays since 1958.

Donors and how to contribute. B6

Today's total: \$4,465

Given to date: \$72,077.57



# Giving

Continued from Page A1

nonprofit organizations get up to 40 percent of their annual donations during the last six weeks of the year. “The last weeks (are) like a big Black Friday,” said Eileen Heisman, president and CEO of the National Philanthropic Trust in Jenkintown, a public charity that works with high-net worth donors. “It’s this whole ritual that Americans have done for decades. When they decide to give is often around the holiday season.”

Americans as a whole are tremendously generous. Last year, U.S. citizens donated an estimated \$373.25 billion, according to the Giving USA 2016 report, a 4.1 percent increase over 2014 and the second record year in a row. Donations from individuals reached \$264.58 billion, while corporate giving grew 3.9 percent, to \$18.45 billion. Foundations contributed \$58.46 billion, and charitable bequests accounted for \$31.76 billion.

The majority of donations in 2015 went to religious institutions, which received \$119.3 billion. Other top donation categories were education, human services and foundations.

A 2007 study by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University found that respondents reported giving about 24 percent of their total annual donations

between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day.

“I think it is because we do naturally kind of take stock at this time of year,” said Jim Cawley, a former lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania and Bucks County commissioner who is the CEO of the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. “Whatever holiday it is that you choose to celebrate, or not to celebrate, there is a societal reflection on where we are, what’s transpired over the previous year, and getting ready for the next year. It’s that point that people reaffirm their decision to be generous, and to give, either of their time or their treasure or their talent.”

## GIVE FOR HEALTH

Giving back doesn’t just benefit the organizations that receive donations. Some believe it can be good for the donor’s health.

“Some people get so focused on reciprocal gains and calculations and tit for tat, that they lose sight of the fact that giving is the significant alternative to getting caught up in a downward vortex of rumination and hostility,” said Stephen G. Post, an author, public speaker and professor at Stony Brook University in New York. “Those destructive emotions are terrible. When people just focus their minds on what they can do to help others, it turns off a lot of the neurological circuits that are associated with hostility, bitterness and so forth.”

If left unchecked, Post said, negative emotions have been shown to lead to cardiovascular disease and other serious physical health problems.

Post has been studying the effects of charitable giving since the 1990s, under the mentorship of noted businessman and philanthropist Sir John Templeton, founder of the John Templeton Foundation in Conshohocken.

“He really felt that giving oftentimes benefits the giver just as much, if not in some sense more, than those who receive,” Post said. “He thought we were generous for the sake of helping others, and he was very sincere about that, but he also wrote eloquently about how people who are generous tend to be ‘radiant.’ They tend to be joyful.”

A 2010 survey by UnitedHealthcare and Volunteer Match seemed to support that. Two-thirds of respondents who reported volunteering in 2009 said it made them feel physically healthier. Three-quarters reported lower stress levels, improved emotional health and better recovery “from loss and disappointment.” Volunteers said they had less trouble sleeping, less anxiety, better friendships and a sense of control over chronic health conditions than before they volunteered.

One only needs to consider the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol,” to see the effects of giving, Post said.

“He’s very bitter,” Post said. “He’s ruminating. He can’t forgive this gal who he wanted to marry who stifled him. He’s lived this ugly, nasty life. And then, he is slowly awakened to the value of being a giver. The light slowly turns on for him. He’s discovered what I call the ‘giver’s glow.’ When he’s last seen in that book, he’s like a young adolescent, bouncing around a London street helping everybody in sight. All his bitterness, hostility, and hatred, all his emptiness, is gone. And it’s a new Scrooge.”

## GIVE FOR BOTTOM LINE

Philanthropy is important for corporate health, as well.

“Business ethics used to be this dreadful, boring, horrible stuff about just merely do no harm,” said Post. “Now, if you look at the great corporations, there’s a tremendous emphasis on encouraging employees (to volunteer or donate). They all understand that if they can create a climate of generosity, of concern about all people, they know that this is great for the world around them, great for their employees, great for their morale, and ultimately great for the success of their companies.”

The Rose Group’s charity doesn’t stop with toys during the holiday. Throughout the year, the company raises funds for the Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation, the pediatric cancer charity started by the parents of Alexandra Scott, the

Montgomery County girl who ran a lemonade stand to raise money for other children with cancer. She died in 2004 when she was 8.

Since 2005, in partnership with other Applebee’s franchise operators, the Rose Group has helped raised more than \$6 million for the organization. Much of those funds are raised annually at the store level, where employees hold their own lemonade stands and other fundraisers.

Rose Group CEO Jeff Warden said philanthropy is a key part of the company’s culture as well as its business plan.

“If you embed yourself in the community, you’re not viewed as a chain,” Warden said. “You’re not viewed as this monolithic community. We’re a local company. So for us, being part of the local community is extremely important.”

Individual restaurants are required to participate in fundraising campaigns, Warden said, and participation is measured.

“This is giving back to the community and expecting nothing back in return, other than your reputation as a participant in those communities,” he said.

But giving back goes beyond that, company leaders said. It helps the bottom line, too, by creating engaged employees who are more likely to be loyal to their employer because the employer is loyal to the community.

“It gives people a feeling they’re making a

difference,” said Jennifer Hannigan, a human resources specialist and United Way campaign coordinator at M&C Specialties, a contract manufacturer in Upper Southampton.

For the past 10 years, M&C employees have all contributed part of their paychecks to the United Way of Bucks County. Because of the 100-percent participation, M&C’s parent company, Illinois Tool Works, doubles its corporate match. That results in an annual donation of about \$30,000, Hannigan said. Employees also volunteer at United Way events.

Giving back has “become ingrained,” Hannigan said. “It doesn’t feel like a chore. It’s become part of the culture.”

While the holidays are critical for nonprofits, leaders say the generosity doesn’t stop there.

“There’s no doubt that people in Bucks County are very generous,” said Marissa Christie, newly named CEO of the United Way of Bucks County. “If there is a challenge we face in Bucks County, it’s more that people don’t always understand the true depth of the needs of the community. It’s sometimes easy to look outside Bucks County and see challenges other communities are facing and think, ‘That doesn’t happen here.’ We have enough opportunity to make an impact here.”

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# Joy

Continued from Page A1

himself at a Philadelphia facility for the disabled.

“I never felt that bitterness or anger; I cherished the life inside of me,” he said. “I always felt like I had some place to go. Or a new ‘first’ to experience. Keeping gratitude is a perspective that I am lost without.”

A few months after the accident, Metzger left Miami for a rehabilitation center in Malvern that specialized in head injuries.

His body remained limp, though he could move his hands. He had to be tied into a wheelchair so he wouldn’t roll

out onto the floor.

“I hated that, unable to speak, accustomed only to a bed, forced to sit,” he said. “Nurses left me to go about their business. Frustrated and furious, I banged my feet against the floor. ‘Let me out. Let me lie down. I beg you.’”

Metzger used a small board with letters on it to communicate; one by one, he pointed to the letters to express his needs. He had no swallow reflex, so liquids were off limits as well as solid foods. The first word he recalls expressing was “thirsty.”

Nine months after the accident, he learned to speak again, and slowly regained enough strength to return home to his family. The joy was short-lived, Metzger said,

because his wife left him and took their 5-year-old daughter with her.

“It was as devastating as the accident,” said Metzger, who moved into the Philadelphia facility for the disabled, where he would continue his recovery and learn a new trade. “More than ever, I needed help,” he recalled.

It was more two years before he began taking his first steps, and he recalls the joy that followed that achievement.

“I consciously synchronized weight shift, gait size, foot placement, balance control and arm swing. How many people recall the delight (of their first steps) ... I remember the day I took my first three unaided steps” said Metzger.

And though he still walks with a cane, he said, “Now, every step is a celebration.”

Today, from his one-bedroom apartment in the center of Doylestown Borough, he shares his appreciation for this second chance at life.

A picture of his daughter, who’s now 38, is prominently displayed by his desk. During rehabilitation, he changed careers paths, studying video technology and animation. He also has a website — treasureinside.net — that he

uses to spread his message of hope and joy.

“A favorite joke of mine: You only live once,” he said. “Truthful is the sentiment, ironic is the statement. I have lived twice. I have come to the edge of death, then to the brink of emotional ruin. I was without a body I could command, a personality I could call my own and a memory I could retain.”

And still, Metzger said, he emerged a better person for all his suffering. He said he’s more

open with people, more kind and more giving.

“When you have difficulties, you should step back, take a deep breath and let life itself be your guide,” he said. “We all have the power to get over our obstacles. I watched life rebuild someone — myself, almost dead — into a real living person. From here, one can only climb uphill.”

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## WHAT DID YOU LEARN IN 2016?

And what will you do differently in 2017?

This news organization is looking for answers to the question: “What will you change or do differently based on what you

learned from something that happened to you in 2016?”

The response can be from a personal, political, professional or any other level, but we’re looking for something beyond the usual

“I’m going on a diet” type of New Year’s resolution.

Anyone willing to respond to the question for a story should contact staff writer Chris English at 215-949-4193 or email cenglish@calkins.com



**42°**  
**26°**  
Clouds and sun

## LOTTERIES Tue., 12-20-16

### NEW JERSEY

Pick 3: 8-9-0  
Pick 4: 5-5-9-4  
Cash 5:  
4-9-11-24-26  
Xtra: 3  
Midday Pick 3: 4-9-2  
Midday Pick 4:  
4-9-3-3  
5 Card Cash:  
5 SH 1 A+ 1 A 1 AS 1 SC 1 QC

### PENNSYLVANIA

Pick 2 Day: 5-6 Wild: 3  
Pick 2 Evening: 8-4 Wild: 8  
Pick 3 Day: 0-1-1 Wild: 3  
Pick 3 Evening: 7-0-1 Wild: 8  
Pick 4 Day: 6-8-5-6 Wild: 3  
Pick 4 Evening: 9-2-3-4 Wild: 8  
Pick 5 Day: 8-0-3-0-7 Wild: 3  
Pick 5 Evening: 6-6-4-3-3 Wild: 8  
Cash 5: 2-10-11-25-36  
Treasure Hunt: 2-4-8-15-24

## ONLINE POLLS

buckscountycouriertimes.com  
What’s your favorite Christmas special?  
35% Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer  
2% Christmas Eve on Sesame Street  
33% A Charlie Brown Christmas  
9% Frosty the Snowman  
21% How the Grinch Stole Christmas

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Do you expect 2017 to be a better year than 2016?

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## MULTI-STATE LOTTERIES

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Mon., 12-19-16<br>Cash4Life:<br>1-8-16-22-47 3 | Tue., 12-20-16<br>Mega Millions:<br>1-12-14-48-65 2 | Sat., 12-17-16<br>Powerball:<br>1-8-16-40-48 10 |
|--|---|---|

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Season's Greetings

from

BUCKS COUNTY  
Courier Times

To allow our employees and independent contractors who produce and deliver your newspaper to enjoy the holidays with their family and friends, we will be publishing the Sunday, December 25, 2016 newspaper on Saturday morning, December 24, 2016. Please look for your newspaper with all the holiday inserts ad specials on Saturday morning!

Our customer service call center will be open  
Saturday, December 24, 2016 from 6 am - 10 am to serve you.  
**1.866.492.1514**