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| <p>Christopher Cross - April 4, 7:30pm</p> <p>Jerry Seinfeld - April 6, 7:00pm and 9:30pm</p> <p>Theresa Caputo Live! The Experience - April 10, 7:30pm</p> <p>The Wizard of Oz - April 13, 7:30pm</p> <p>The Drifters - April 14, 7:30pm</p> <p>T-Pain - April 15, 7:00pm</p> <p>F.M. Kirby Fest: A night of Pints, Pinot and Performing Arts - April 21, 5:00pm</p> <p>Disney Jr. Dance Party On Tour - April 27, 3:00 & 6:00pm</p> <p>Jack Hanna - April 28, 3:00pm</p> <p>Nick Di Paolo - April 28, 8:00pm</p> <p>Criss Angel Raw - May 2, 7:30pm</p> <p>Miranda Sings - May 5, 7:00pm</p> <p>Art Garfunkel - May 8, 8:00pm</p> <p>Ani DiFranco - May 11, 8:00pm</p> <p>The New York Bee Gees - May 12, 8:00pm</p> <p>Peppa Pig Live! - May 15, 6:00pm</p> <p>Cabaret - May 17, 7:30pm</p> | <p>Montgomery Gentry - May 18, 8:00pm</p> <p>The Greatest Pirate Story Never Told - May 19, 2:00pm</p> <p>Froggy 101 presents Guitars and Stars - May 22, 7:00pm</p> <p>Kenny Rogers - May 31, 7:30pm</p> <p>Final World Tour: The Gambler's Last Deal Special Guest: Linda Davis</p> <p>Joe Nardone Presents: The Ultimate Doo Wop & Rock Show! - June 9, 7:00pm</p> <p>Dave Hause - June 17, 7:30pm</p> <p>Live from the Chandelier Lobby</p> <p>Peter Frampton - June 18, 7:30pm</p> <p>Blockbuster Hit Parade - June 29, 8:00pm</p> <p>Quiet Riot, The Sweet, & House of Lords</p> <p>Dion - July 27, 7:30pm</p> <p>Yanni - July 31, 7:00pm</p> <p>Blues Traveler - August 1, 8:00pm</p> <p>Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band & Beth Hart Band - August 2, 7:30pm</p> <p>Kansas - November 23, 7:30pm</p> |
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Honoring the area's best

Times Leader readers voted on their favorite businesses in the region, including everything from the best place to get a burger to the best health care provided. Winners were honored a banquet on Tuesday and in this special section. For more photos, go to timesleader.com.

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Pictured are Times Leader staff members at the newspaper's annual Readers' Choice Awards banquet. From left, Publisher Mike Murray, Major Accounts Executive Michael McGinley, Advertising Director Kerry Miscavage, Advertising Manager Diane McGee, Circulation Director Tom Salvo, Production Director Jeff Tinner, Advertising Associate Hartt Lang, and Digital Operations Robert Vanderveken.



Rita Kaminski and Lynn Humanik, of St. Nicholas Church in Wilkes-Barre, enjoy the banquet. The church's bazaar won for best local bazaar.



NEPA Geeks was voted best place for computer repair. Sara and Jason Percival showed up to represent the business.



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Offering a little bit of everything

By Bill O'Boyle
boboyl@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — If you enjoy good food, a tasty martini, a friendly bartender, awesome atmosphere, great service and you want to impress someone on your first date, then Cork Bar & Restaurant is for you.

And when the weather cooperates, you can enjoy all of Cork's award-winning food, drink and service on the restaurant's outdoor patio — and your dog is welcome.

Cork Restaurant has won several titles in the 2018 Times Leader Readers' Choice Awards:

- Best Martini — 14 different varieties
 - Best Place for a First Date
 - Best Menu
 - Best Atmosphere
 - Best Server — Luanne Stach
 - Best Chef — Rawn Henderson
 - Best Outdoor Dining
- If this was the Oscars, Cork would be the toast of Hollywood.

Nestled in a quiet neighborhood in the city's north end, Cork opened in 2007. It is described as an upscale bar and restaurant for classic cocktails and eclectic New American dishes with an Italian touch.

Carolyn Saporito, general manager and bartender, has been at



Brandon Gavin, Chef Rawn Henderson, Luanne Stach and Carolyn Saporito are just a few of the staff at Cork who work to make for a great experience.



General manager and bartender Carolyn Saporito makes a pomegranite martini at Cork.

Nestled in a quiet neighborhood in the city's north end, Cork opened in 2007. It is described as an upscale bar and restaurant for classic cocktails and eclectic new American dishes with an Italian touch.

Cork from the beginning. She said Cork has plenty of repeat and regular customers, but many new faces come in all the time.

She said Rob Friedman bought the business about a year ago and has made several upgrades

and renovations. She said the second floor dining area now offers a more private, intimate setting for those romantic dinners, as well as larger areas for group dining.

Saporito said she loves to concoct different martinis weekly. She said she

makes her own syrups and nectars, but she said she did learn the secret of making the perfect traditional gin or vodka martini.

"Shake it well," she said. "A veteran bartender in Chicago taught me that."

Chef Rawn said his specialty is seafood, but he offers a diverse menu with an extensive selection of appetizers, steaks, seafood and pasta dishes, in addition to a sandwich menu.

"I always want to give our customers what they want," Henderson said. "I like to make people happy."

And if a customer orders a steak very well done — something some chefs might not like — Henderson said, "I give it to them. It's what they want, and the customer is always right."

Stach said she likes to talk to people. She said she always has a smile on her face.

"I want to make them feel welcome at all times," she said. "Our customers are more like friends. We talk about things going on in their lives and with their families."

Stach said she was thrilled and honored to be named Best Server.

"It really makes me feel great," said Stach, 50 of

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Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Cork Restaurant in Wilkes-Barre.

Cork

From page 7

West Pittston. "I've been doing this since I was 16 years old. I love working with people."

To complement its cuisine, Cork also features an extensive selection of premium wines. The spacious, multi-level floor plan features a classy, yet contemporary decor and a relaxed cosmopolitan ambiance perfect for dining or entertaining.

Cork's second floor dining area provides an ideal setting for a romantic dinner for two or a larger dinner group of friends or family. A quiet, window-lined enclosed porch area has become a favorite of couples who wish to enjoy an intimate dinner.

The Cork website says it best: Cork is a place where customers become friends.

larger dinner party for a group, comfortably seating up to 25. The entire second floor is also available for rehearsal dinners and other parties, and can seat up to 50. In the downstairs bar area, there is table seating for 35. A bar menu is also available downstairs.

During the warmer months, the Cork patio is the ideal spot for dining or cocktails. The patio is also available for cocktail parties or other events — and the Cork patio is also dog friendly.

Cork has become a favorite venue for rehearsal dinners, shows, business luncheons and dinners, birthday gatherings, fundraisers, holiday parties, organizational dinners, meetings and more.



Sean McKeag photos | Times Leader

Erwine Home Health and Hospice was well represented at the Times Leader's Readers' Choice Awards banquet. Pictured, front row: Joanne Herron, Brenda Matechak, Hope Rogers, Sharon Musto. Second row: Jenny Day and Liz Senczakowicz.



Marion Kendzor and Anne Rodella, of the F.M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts, represented the facility at the banquet. The center won for best entertainment venue and best music venue.



Falzone Towing won for best towing company.

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JOAN HARRIS CENTRE: BEST DANCE STUDIO

A history of dancing to success

By Kulsoom Khan
kkhan@timesleader.com

LUZERNE — Dance has always been a big part of Jim and Sean Harris' lives. The brothers grew up around dancers, married dancers, and have other siblings who either teach dance or are performers themselves. "It's just something we do," said Jim. Their biggest influence was their mother, Joan Harris, who performed in two Broadway musicals, for the American Ballet Theater in New York City and also ran seven dance schools in the Big Apple. After spending 15 years in New York City, she moved back to the area and created the Joan Harris Centre, a dance studio based in Luzerne in 1982. Jim and Sean took over the studio after their mother was involved in a serious car accident five years later. She later passed away in 2007. Currently, Jim, Sean, along with their wives own and operate the studio.

The studio offers classes in ballet, jazz, tap, hip-hop, and contemporary dance, which are open to both those who are interested in becoming professional dancers as well as those who dance as a hobby. Sean currently teaches jazz and tap dance at the school. He previously resided in Miami where he was part of the American Dance Theater as well as the Miami Civic Dance Theater. Sean also teaches tap dancing courses at Wilkes University and an introduction to jazz dance course at King's College.

The center was voted best dance studio by Times Leader readers in the newspaper's



Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Ballerinas practice a number at the Joan Harris Centre in Luzerne.

annual Readers' Choice Awards.

Sean said the centre has "a very strong ballet program" and a strong tap and jazz program as well. However, as times are changing, there has been an increased interest in hip-hop, which led the studio to offer more hip-hop classes.

"That's one of the things I teach in my courses over at the university is how different music will change different styles of dance and how we always adapt over the years,"

See SUCCCESS | 13



Sean and Jennifer Harris, and Jim and Elisabeth Harris pose for a portrait in the Joan Harris Centre in Luzerne.

Success

From page 12

Sean said. The current 500 students, who attend classes at the center, range from children as

young as 4 years old to senior citizens. "Some of the people who have been dancing with us have literally been a part of the studio for over 30 years," said Jim. "When you're a serious dancer, it defines you. It becomes your life."

Sean emphasized how important the arts are for young people in particular and that dance teaches children camaraderie, team work, self-respect and discipline. "Mankind has been dancing since ... my mom use to say since the

first caveman dropped the rock on his toe," he said with a laugh. The students from the studio participate in five recitals per year, concluding with a performance at the F.M. Kirby Center in the summer.

Many of the center's former students have achieved a great deal after completing their training, including touring

with Cirque Du Soleil, performing in the movie Center Stage, on cruise ships and for the New York City Ballet as well as the Miami Civic Ballet and the Tampa Ballet. Jim mentioned that former students have also been hired as professional dancers for the Philadelphia Eagles and the Philadelphia 76ers. Even though NEPA's

arts scene sometimes gets overshadowed by the popularity of sports and outdoor activities, both brothers agree that dance will always have a place in the community. "We literally are the proof because here is a business that's been around for the better part of four decades, and it's still thriving," said Jim.



Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Ballerina Kendalyn Gerhardt, 13, of West Wyoming, rehearses a 'Romeo and Juliet' excerpt at the Joan Harris Centre in Luzerne. The center was voted best dance studio by Times Leader readers in the newspaper's annual Readers' Choice Awards.

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ST. NICK'S: BEST BAZAAR

Food, music and much more

By Joe Soprano
jsoprano@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — According to the popular saying, Northeastern Pennsylvania has a church on every corner.

Come summer, most of the churches string yellow lights in their parking lots and hold what has become a rite of the season in the region — a church bazaar.

And, according to Times Leader readers, no bazaar is more popular than the one held every July at St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church on Washington Street in Wilkes-Barre. It was voted best bazaar by Times Leader readers in the newspaper's annual Readers' Choice Awards.

St. Nick's annual parish picnic has all the staples of the church

bazaar circuit — games of chance, food, music, adult beverages, etc.

But among the mounds of used instant bingo tickets that will litter the parking lot, St. Nick's may be best known for its potato pancakes.

Always a hot item at any parish picnic, it's no different at St. Nick's. The line for the potato pancake stand begins to form early in the evening each night. If you don't time your visit to the stand just right, you could end spending most of your evening in line for the delicious treat instead of trying your luck at the Big 6 — or perhaps the duck pond if you are a bit younger.

The bazaar also offers a complete line of ethnic food, along with the always popular "Fried Dough."

Rumor has it, St. Nick's came

upon the recipe for its fried dough one year when it decided to replace a funnel cake stand. Parishioners came up with frying round hunks of dough and coating it with either sugar or cinnamon sugar.

But there is an additional treat for visitors to festival - Hispanic food and music.

A few years ago, St. Nick's welcomed a Hispanic congregation into its parish. That congregation brought with it its traditions ... and its food to the delight of many a visitor to the annual picnic.

Be sure to set aside at least one evening during July 19 through July 21 for this year's bazaar.

Reach Joe Soprano at 570-991-6393 or on Twitter @TLnews.com



Times Leader file photos

If you want potato pancakes at St. Nick's bazaar, get in line early.



St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church's annual bazaar is a hit with Times Leader readers.

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Sean McKeag photos | Times Leader
Wilkes-Barre Mayor Tony George and Michael Wood, a special assistant to the president at Wilkes University, stopped by the event.



Driscoll's Home Center in West Pittston was represented by Doc Endrusick, Nicole Romanowski and Liz and Dennis Driscoll.

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CRABBY'S SEAFOOD GRILL: BEST SEAFOOD, BEST WINGS AND BEST TAKE OUT

Serving quality food with a family vibe

By Eileen Godin
egodin@timesleader.com

DALLAS TWP. — Crabby's Seafood Grill sailed into the Back Mountain in 2016 and anchored itself into local palates with seafood and land-lover culinary dishes.

Crabby's Seafood and Pipes Bar, located at 3159 Lower Demunds Rd., has made waves in the local restaurant scene, which inspired Times Leader readers to vote the eatery as having the best seafood, best wings and best take out in the newspaper's annual Readers' Choice Awards.

"It is very flattering," co-owner Kim Gonzales said.

Owners Ron Roberts, his daughter Kim and her husband Bill Gonzales attribute the accolades to their friendly staff, skilled chefs and fresh seafood.

"Our Head Chef Kim Svec encourages the input from the other chefs on the menu fare," which helps give some menu items a "Cajun twist," Roberts said. "All our seafood is fresh; nothing is frozen."

Roberts' seafood vendors come from the Chesapeake Bay and Philadelphia regions.

Also, King Neptune's owners Bob and Lynda Sorber shared their fried scallop recipe with Roberts when they retired, Roberts said.

King Neptune was a 57-year-old takeout seafood eatery, previously located at 2974 Route 415 in Dallas. It closed in July 2017.

"Some of our seafaring



Crabby's Seafood Grill and Pipes Bar co-owners Ron Roberts, his daughter, Kim, and her husband, Bill Gonzalez.

Sean McKeag | Times Leader

decorations came from King Neptunes," Roberts said.

If the flavors from the deep don't ignite taste buds, then Crabby's Seafood Grill's fiery chicken wings will, according to Roberts.

The owners attribute the popularity of their wings to their jumbo size as well as the variety of sauces.

"Our chicken wings are big," Roberts said. "We get the jumbo-size wings."

Bill Gonzales describes the

chicken wing as the size of a turkey leg.

Then add one of their signature sauces, such as Body Bag or Ponchartrain for a challenge.

"When they first did the wings over Montage 20 some years ago, those two sauces took first place two years in a row," said Roberts, who was the original owner of the former French Quarter on Main Street in Luzerne from 1996 to 2001.

"Ponchartrain is a little bit like a Louisiana beefed up scampi," Roberts said.

Other sauces available include mild, hot, butter garlic, Cajun hot blue cheese, Cajun dry rub and Fireball BBQ.

The Ponchartrain sauce was named after a large lake in southern Louisiana and reflects the restaurant's Cajun influence, Roberts said.

The Body Bag sauce was named to give consumers a warning of its extreme spici-

ness, Roberts said.

"The Body Bag wings are very, very hot," Roberts said.

"The only one that I saw eat a whole dozen was a 90-year-old man," Kim said. "I thought it was going to kill him, but he ate it like a champ. Our son has been trying to eat a dozen for a year and a half now."

Bill said their son could only eat three to four Body Bag wings.

See CRABBY'S | 22

Crabby's

From page 21

Crabby's Seafood Grill also offers take-out to accommodate busy families.

The restaurateurs have made family the focal point of their business, Roberts said, noting they have many family members working at Crabby's Seafood Grill and Pipes Bar, which makes give the eatery a family vibe. "Everyone mingles," Bill said.

The no smoking policy in the dining room and bar areas also add to the atmosphere, Roberts said. Smokers do have access to an outdoor area, he said.

Also, if a menu item catches a customer's attention, but they are unsure if they would enjoy it, samples can be provided, Roberts said. Patrons come from all over the Back Mountain and Wyoming Valley, Robert said.

"We have customers that come from Sweet Valley, Nanticoke, Mountain Top and the Poconos," Roberts said.

Reach Eileen Godin at 570-991-6387 or on Twitter @TLNews.



Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Crabby's Seafood Grill and Pipes Bar, located at 3159 Lower Demunds Rd. in Dallas Township, has made waves in the local restaurant scene with fresh seafood and non-seafood menu items.

SANITARY BAKERY: BEST BAKERY

A century of tasty treats

By Toni Pennello
tpennello@timesleader.com

NANTICOKE — Back in the 1930s and '40s, instead of penny candy, Sanitary Bakery would hand out loaves of bread from their float in Nanticoke parades, said co-owner Joe Kowalski.

"That's how much times have changed," he mused.

The family estimates that the bakery originally opened around 1918, and it began as a wholesale white bread business called "Navy Sliced Bread," according to its website.

"We're coming close to 100 years in business by the same family, believe it or not," said Kowalski, who co-owns the bakery with his brother, Ed. "You don't see much of that at all anymore."

It has spent all this time at the same location, 126 E. Ridge St.

Times Leaders readers are evidently very familiar with the location as the bakery was voted best bakery in the region in the newspaper's fifth annual Readers' Choice Awards.

The company spent 20-or-so years selling white bread from house to house. It wasn't until the 1940s that the bakery entered the world of retail, changing its name to Sanitary Bakery.

"(We went) to the full variety of baked goods. We've been doing it



Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Assistant decorator Jillian Jones poses for a picture at Sanitary Bakery in Nanticoke. The bakery was voted best bakery by Times Leader readers in the newspaper's annual Readers' Choice Awards.

since," Kowalski said, claiming his as "the oldest bakery in Northeastern Pennsylvania."

These days, Sanitary Bakery is known for its homemade, old-fashioned rye bread and sweet rolls, cakes, pizza and a new line spearheaded by Kowalski's son, Aaron. Aaron makes pierogies, haluski and other savory foods.

"He's running that part of the business. That's his baby right there, and

he does very well with it," Kowalski said. They are also known for their pizza and pierogi fundraisers.

Kowalski said that a large part of the business comes from out-of-town clientele.

"We have the largest variety in the area that you're gonna find in baked goods. We have quality, and we have the price," he said, explain-

See SANITARY | 25



Sanitary Bakery in Nanticoke has been at the same location for nearly 100 years.

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Sanitary

From page 23

ing that since the family owns its own building, the business does not have high expenses.

What has kept them in business so long? Kowalski points to hard work and quality control.

"We work our rear

ends off, an average of 14 hour days, six days a week," he explained. The bakery is only closed on Monday, but preparatory work is still done even on that day off.

"We put five or six hours in on a Monday. We're kind of married to the business, and that's why we're still here."

Even non-related

employees are "married" to the business, Kowalski said. Some have been with Sanitary Bakery for 15, 20 or even 25 years.

"I've got a lot of good employees that have been with me a long time," he said. "They kind of keep the same level that we do. They know how we are, they want to make sure everything is right

Sanitary Bakery is known for its homemade, old-fashioned rye bread and sweet rolls, cakes and pizza.

for the customer, and they follow how our fundamentals are.

"Everything is watched by our family. We have a lot of family working. My brother and I ... open the doors in the morning, and we're the last ones usually to leave at night. We watch everything that's going in and out. If it doesn't look good, it doesn't go in the store. That's the bottom line. That's how it is."

Kowalski added that the homemade aspect of the bakery's line of goods sets it apart.

"The production is made by our family. My model (is), you make a product like you're making it for yourself to eat. You're gonna make it good."

VOITEK TV & APPLIANCE: BEST APPLIANCE STORE

Still going strong after 60 years

By **Kulsoom Khan**
kkhan@timesleader.com

EXETER — Even though the technology behind home appliances has changed a great deal over the past few years, “the personalized service” Voitek TV & Appliance Store offers has remained a constant. “Most of our customers are our friends,” said co-owner Dave Voitek, Jr.

The family-run business has been around for around 60 years with the main store in Exeter and another location in Kingston, which was opened in 1975. The idea to start the business came from Dave’s father and uncle, who worked in the coal mines during the day and made service calls for appliances during their free time.

Dave’s brother, Ed Voitek, who helps him run the business said he has been repairing TV sets since he was 12 years old. Taking apart old junk television sets and transforming them was a hobby of his. “I loved it-still love it to this day,” said Ed.

Times Leader readers must love the store too as the voted it best appliance store in the newspaper’s fifth annual Readers’ Choice Awards.

Voitek Appliance has state-of-the art televisions, home theater systems, washers and dryers, and kitchen necessities such as different types of ovens, stoves, microwaves, ice makers that make gourmet ice and wine coolers.

“Anything for the dream kitchen, we have it,” Dave said.

Televisions are some of Voitek’s most popular products, and Dave says that the rise of



Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Dave Voitek, his son Dave, Mark and Ed Voitek, pose for a picture in the showroom of Voitek TV & Appliance in Exeter.

Voitek Appliance has state-of-the art televisions, home theater systems, washers and dryers, and kitchen necessities.

online streaming services and movie downloading websites has not affected the business negatively.

“(People) still watch TV, but they might not do it in the traditional way,” he said. “People are still being entertained by television.”

Surprisingly, Ed says that

the business gets a lot of requests for VCRs.

“We get people asking for them all the time – it’s shocking,” he said.

Just like TV, Ed says that the way people listen to music has changed over the years, using their phones and iPads more

See VOITEK | 27



The outside of Voitek TV & Appliance in Exeter. The store also has a Kingston location on Wyoming Avenue.

Voitek

From page 26

and more. Even though boom boxes, stereos and CD players are not as popular as before, people still do need good speakers and sound systems if they want to play

music on a higher scale.

“Big speakers are back in fashion – very popular, largest growth market out there – but the way (people) are receiving their music is different,” Ed said.

Dave also says that Voitek’s service makes it stand out from corporate stores that sell the same

products. He said that employees help customers over the phone if they are having some kind of issue with their product, make house calls and deliveries are quicker with customers receiving their orders sometimes the same day or the next day. “The service is tremendously different.”



Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Ovens for sale in the showroom of Voitek TV & Appliance in Exeter.

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VOITEK TV AND APPLIANCES

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Best Convenience Store



Bob Smith is the owner of Smith and Miller Roofing, the winner of the Times Leader's Readers' Choice Award as best roofing company.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

42 years of quality service

By Marcella Kester
For Times Leader

WEST PITSTON – What started off as an easy way to make some extra money turned into a 42-year, award-winning business for Bob Smith.

He and his wife of 44 years, Helen, operate Smith & Miller Roofing. The West Pittston business was once again voted as the Times Leader's Readers Choice winner for best roofing company.

"It's a great feeling," Smith said of winning the award. "It's good knowing that people trust me and like the work

Smith & Miller Roofing has been serving the Wyoming Valley's roofing needs for more than four decades, offering a variety of roofs as well as siding and rain gutters and a fair price.

that I do."

Smith & Miller Roofing has been serving the Wyoming Valley's roofing needs for over four decades now, offering a variety of roofs as well as siding and rain gutters and a fair price. Smith employs six full-time workers, many of which have more than 20 years of roof-

ing experience.

The business is also the area's only Platinum Preferred roofing contractor through Owens Corning, and is accredited through the Better Business Bureau with an A+ rating.

Smith & Miller can provide residents with shingle, rubber, modified and

metal roofing materials and installation. The company has installed thousands of roofs through the area and works primarily through word of mouth and recommendations. Asking around, he believes, is one of the first things a prospective customer should do when looking for a roofing contractor.

"Ask people who did their jobs," he said, adding that customers will likely give an honest review – be it negative or positive. he said "Word of mouth is your best advertisement. Your reputa-

See SERVICE | 29

Service

From page 28

tion catches up with you sooner or later – whether its good or bad."

In fact, he spoke of a recent job where a man from Dunmore heard about his company through some co-workers. After three people told the man that Smith was the way to go for roofing, he picked up the phone to

make the call to Smith & Miller.

Although Smith said he is happy to be in the business for so many years, he did admit that it can sometimes be difficult with ever-changing policies. Some of the changes Smith has had to adapt to over the years includes various rules and guidelines handed out by government agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA.

Other times, it can be something as simple as being your own boss – or

bosses.

"My wife is my right hand. She's the brains behind the operation," he said of Helen with a chuckle. "The problem is your work is never done."

Even though adapting to new policies and regulations can be daunting, Smith said the happy moments his business has caused him outweigh the bad. For instance, Smith said one of his favorite things about running a business is getting to meet so many new people.

"I love the people, I've met so many great people over the years and became friends with a lot of them," he said.

Regardless of whether is 1976 or 2018, Smith has always stayed true to honestly serving the people of North-eastern Pennsylvania, and he intends to keep doing just that.

"My motto has always been a good job at a fair price," he said.

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Buying a new mattress is rarely at the top of anyone's favorite things-to-do list. Typically, we put it off until our backs hurt so badly, that we can't take it anymore...and even then, we put it off a little longer. And for good reason, mattress shopping can be overwhelming, filled with unknowns and high-pressure sales people trying their best to sell us the beds that are best for their paycheck. But Mattress Warehouse is changing the way you buy a mattress, starting with their revolutionary diagnostic program called bedMATCH.

bedMATCH is a patented diagnostic system designed to recommend the mattresses that are best suited for a person's individual support needs.

It uses 18 statistical measurements and over 1,000 scientific calculations, along with information that you provide about your sleep preferences to assure that you get the bed that is best for you. In just three minutes, your list of recommended beds is ready. Instead of hundreds of beds to choose from, your search has been narrowed to the optimal five or six for your body type and sleeping position. From here, the staff at Mattress Warehouse will take you through each of your recommendations and assist you in making the final choice that is right for YOU, not them.

While you're at Mattress Warehouse getting fitted for the bed that's right for you, be sure to get fitted for a pillow as well. Next to the mattress, your pillow is the most important part of getting a quality night's sleep. Mattress Warehouse offers a wide variety of pillow options, including Bed Gear performance pillows. Bed Gear's team has engineered enhanced fabric technologies to wick away moisture and dissipate excess heat, genuinely allowing your pillow to stay cooler throughout the night. Products created by Bed Gear are also highly rated for breathability, adding to your sleep comfort. Mattress Warehouse offers pillow fittings through their bedMATCH technology and store personnel to ensure you're getting the right pillow for your support needs.

So now we know, that the mattress and pillow buying process can be made so much easier using

bedMATCH technology. You know you're making the right choice and admit it, it was kind of fun! When was the last time you said that about buying a new mattress? But the technology benefits don't stop there. During your shopping process, you must try out an adjustable base. At first glance, many people associate an adjustable base with what you might find in a hospital. However, these bases have come a long way over the past several years and offer many benefits and features that enhance the overall sleeping experience. Some offer the head to be raised, while others offer head and foot adjustments. Other features include massage, wireless remotes, USB charging and under-bed lighting. Relaxing, reading or watching TV has never been more comfortable. More importantly, an adjustable base, paired with the right mattress and pillow can have truly beneficial health impacts. Allowing your head and feet to be properly adjusted can help to alleviate pressure points and lessen back pain or even reflux issues (as digestion is improved with the use of an adjustable base).

Chronic snoring can also be decreased simply by raising the head at the appropriate angle.

You can find a wide range of adjustable bases at your local Mattress Warehouse. Your mattress set purchase can now be upgraded to include an adjustable base for as low as \$499.

Mattress Warehouse is a family-owned and operated company, based out of Frederick, MD. They opened their first store in 1989 and now have nearly 250 stores in the mid-Atlantic region, including one right here in Wilkes-Barre on Kidder Street. They are focused on quality customer care and the use of technology that results in quality sleep for their customers. Sleep impacts so much of our daily lives and it goes far beyond waking up feeling tired or refreshed. Long-term health impacts such as obesity, diabetes, cancer and Alzheimer's all become a larger risk when a person lacks quality sleep. Make 2018 the year that you focus on yourself and family's health needs by making sure everyone is getting healthy, quality sleep and let Mattress Warehouse help you do it. To find a store near you, visit www.sleephappens.com



Sean McKeag | Times Leader
Uncle Buck's BBQ won was voted best barbecue. Brian 'Buck' Gardner and Donna Gardner showed up to collect the restaurant's award.

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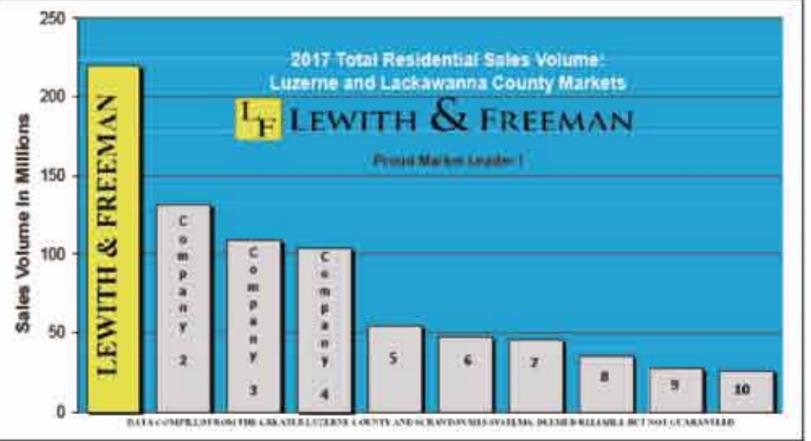
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A hub of education, culture and children's activities

Times Leader staff report

KINGSTON — Not many libraries can pride themselves on being a hub of education as well as culture, but the Hoyt Library is just that.

Located on Wyoming Avenue, the Hoyt Library has been a staple in the Wyoming Valley, providing the community, and particularly children, with a safe place to learn.

According to its website, Daniel Hoyt, grandfather of the 18th governor of Pennsylvania, Henry Hoyt, started meeting with friends at his home to form a library group, "so that their community this side of the Endless Mountains could have the mutual benefits of books."

Daniel's grandson, Frank Weston Hoyt, donated that same house to Kingston Borough, so it could be

From book discussions to yoga and blind date events, the Hoyt has curated a calendar of events suitable for the whole family.

turned into a library.

Since the Hoyt Library's opening in 1928, a lot has changed — from the appearance to the events offered, but the commitment to the community has stayed at the front.

In the 1960s, a group of donors pitched in to refurbish portions of the library. Around the same time, attorney William P. Brewster donated The Brewster Collection to the Hoyt, which greatly increased the reference materials in the library.

In the late 80s, there was a capitol campaign to add a children's wing to the library, which allowed the space to accommodate a larger variety of age groups. While that addition was damaged in 2007 due to heavy snowfall, the Hoyt rebuilt and re-opened in 2009 with the slogan "access the world" to showcase a more modern mission.

Even today, the effects of starting a children's branch of library are felt in full force. There are constantly kid-friendly activities taking place within the Hoyt. LEGO club, story times and science events provide an outlet for children in the area.

But it's not just for the kids. From book discussions to yoga and blind date events, the Hoyt has curated a calendar of events

See HOYT | 34



Bill Tarutis file photo | For Times Leader
Dancers Jennifer and John Ochman, of West Pittston, demonstrate 19th Century dances at the Hoyt Library in Kingston. The demonstration is just one of the many educational events the Hoyt holds throughout the year.



Three-year old Kensie Haas is focused on the book 'Pete the Cat' being read by Katie Brown at the Hoyt Library.

Tony Callaio | For Times Leader

Hoyt

From page 34

suitable for the whole family.

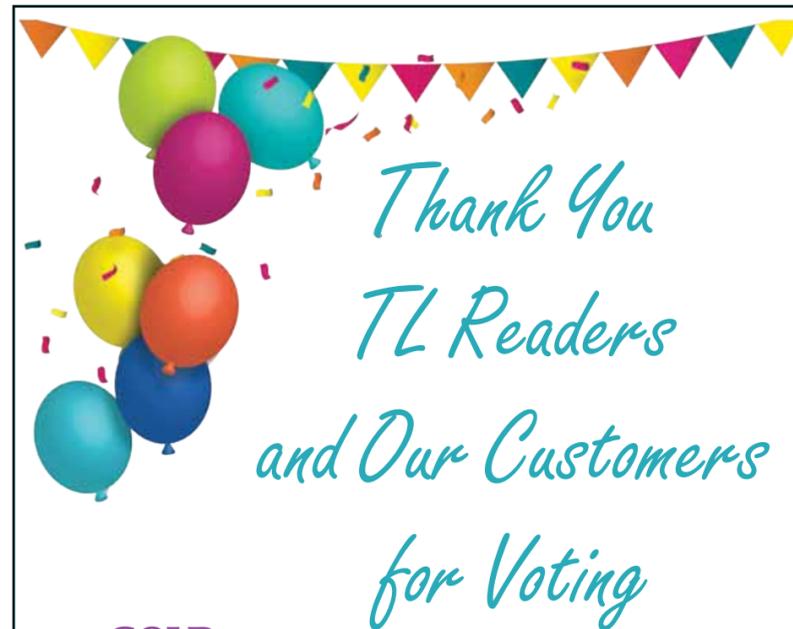
The Hoyt has evolved over the years to serve the Wyoming Valley. According to the website, the library has been renovated, rebuilt and

refurbished. Next month, the library will host a 90th celebration at the Pierce Street Deli, and in May, they will host a Royal Wedding Tea Party.

In addition to the books, periodicals, audio and video tapes and extensive reference materials, the Hoyt also has

online catalog capacity that facilitates finding and borrowing books from any library in Pennsylvania.

The collection now includes thousands of volumes and is central to the education, recreation and life enrichment of its patrons throughout the region.



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TURKEY HILL, PLAINS TOWNSHIP: BEST CONVENIENCE STORE

Gas, food and more to go

By Patrick Kernan
pkernan@timesleader.com

PLAINS TWP. — For the fifth year running, Times Leader readers have voted a Turkey Hill Minit Market the best convenience store in the area.

This year, though, readers decided to get a bit more specific. Instead of voting Turkey Hill as a whole the best in the area, they highlighted the store in Plains Township.

Located at 16 S. Main St., the Turkey Hill has been faithfully serving the people of Plains Township for many years now, but not always in the

same spot.

Previously, the convenience store was housed in a smaller location about a block down the street, but in 2012, Turkey Hill opened an expanded location where it's currently housed.

The store is one of many in the Wyoming Valley operated by the nearly ubiquitous chain.

Turkey Hill Minit Markets aim to be the go-to place for a quick bite to eat.

Take, for example, the store's "Fresh to Go" selections. Customers can drop in, grab a pre-made sandwich or burger —

even pizzas — and be out of the store in a matter of minutes.

But if you would rather a selection that's crafted more for your specific tastes, and don't mind waiting another minute or two, you can order your food to be exactly the way you want it.

With some stores featuring touch-screen ordering, you can be sure the cook will know exactly the way you want your burger topped off.

And if you're looking for something to wash your meal down, Turkey Hill's got you covered there too. The store's

Coffee Central and Soda Central offer an array of options to quench your thirst.

From fountain drinks to bottled beverages, and even piping hot coffee, it's all there. There are also numerous flavor options to add to your drinks.

But besides ready to eat food and an array of drinks, the store's got plenty for you. Turkey Hill can be your one-stop shop for tobacco products and lottery games.

Plenty of locations, such as the one in Plains Township, have gas pumps, letting you refuel in more ways than one.



The Plains Township Turkey Hill was voted the area's best convenience store.

To keep gas costs low — and to keep customers coming back — Turkey Hill offers customers a Rewards Card program, which lets cardholders take 3 cents off per gallon of gas. The car also offers other rewards on in-store purchases.

Turkey Hill has a long history which started in Pennsylvania, being first opened in 1967 in Lancaster by Charles

and Emerson Frey. From there, the company has branched out to nearly 300 stores across Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana. The vast majority of those stores sell gasoline.

Turkey Hill, headquartered in Manor Township outside Lancaster, is one of five convenience store chains operated by The Kroger Co.

Reach Patrick Kernan at 570-991-6386 or on Twitter @PatKernan

RAINBOW JEWELERS: BEST JEWELRY STORE



The Rainbow Jewelers staff includes, from left, Deanna Thomas, Rose Marie Wateski, Stan Wateski, Rose Marie 'Mama Rose' Wateski and Jennifer Nice. Sean McKeag | Times Leader

More than just a jewelry store

By Mary Therese Biebel
mbiebel@timesleader.com

KINGSTON — "Honestly, five stars isn't enough. Absolutely adore this jewelry store ..."

"The woman who helped us was phenomenal ..."

"World-class customer service ..."

Those are the kind of comments you'll find on Rainbow Jewelers' Facebook page, and they're a hint as to why the family-owned jewelry store — established by Stan and Rose Marie "Mama Rose" Wateski in 1978 — has

been named the area's best jewelry store in the Times Leader's 2018 Readers' Choice Awards for at least the fourth consecutive year.

"You try to treat people the way you want to be treated," said Rose Marie Wateski, one of the founders' daughters, who is named after her mother. "Always make them feel comfortable."

Sharing that philosophy with Rose Marie Wateski and her parents are her brother, Stanley, and sister, Deanna Thomas, who all work at Rainbow Jewelers, 789 Wyoming Ave., along with staffers Theresa Mulesky, Jennifer

Nice, Kathy Breznay and Jean Marie Stoss, who seem to have been honorarily adopted into the family. Mulesky has worked at the store for 20 years; Nice for 14; Breznay for 10 and Stoss for 3.

Working with gleaming jewelry is a pleasure, Nice said, but it's not the only reason she enjoys her job.

"You know what else? We meet a lot of nice people every day, and we get a lot of repeat customers. They come in to buy an engagement ring, and then their wedding rings. Then we get to see their family growing up."

The jewelry people buy often com-

memorates a joyous occasion, Wateski said, and the staff enjoys helping them select those special pieces.

"Some guys know exactly what they want, and some have no idea," she said of gentlemen who are looking for engagement rings.

"Some have never bought jewelry before, and they get really nervous," she said, explaining the staff works to guide them to the ideal ring for the couple, not the most expensive.

"We're not on commission," she said.

See RAINBOW | 38

Rainbow

From page 37

"It doesn't matter to us if you are making a \$25 purchase, or \$20,000."

The wide selection of engagement rings ranges from solitaires to "halo" settings, in which a circle of tiny diamonds surrounds the star attraction. There's even an option to choose a stone and a setting from Gabriel & Co. and design your own ring.

With Mother's Day fast approaching, the staff expects gift-givers will come in looking for jewelry that features the birthstones of each child in the family; with First Communion and Confirmation season about to start, they expect to sell pendant crosses and crucifixes.

For graduations, Wateski predicted, many people might

be interested in Citizen wristwatches, which run on solar power.

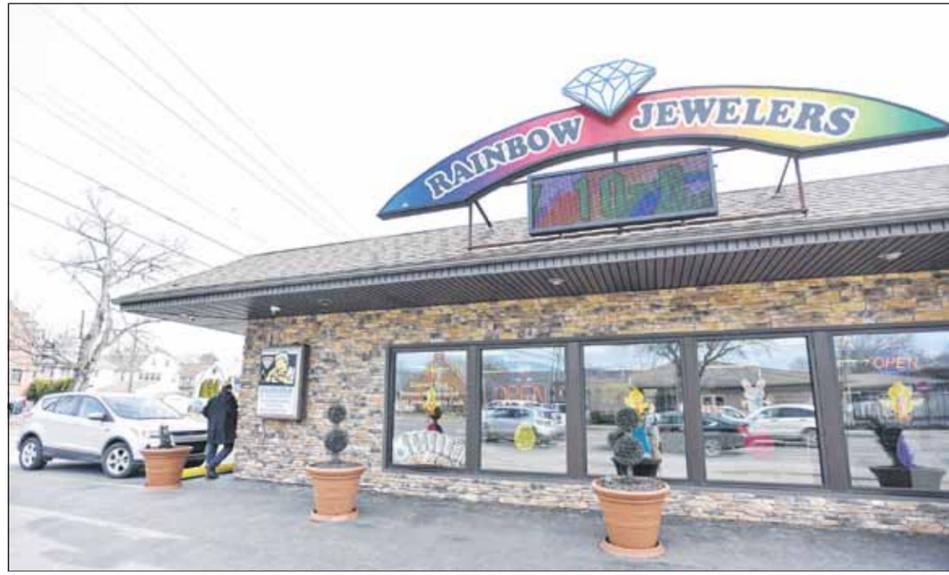
"You never have to change the battery," Wateski said.

The store stocks such classic jewelry as birthstones and pearls, along with such contemporary items as an apple charm for a teacher or an "EMT" charm for an emergency medical technician; bracelets emblazoned with words of inspiration and "princess rings" which are shaped like crowns or tiaras but sized to fit a finger.

"A boy might give this to his girlfriend," Wateski suggested of the last item. "Especially if he calls her 'princess.'"

Along with the many new items you'll find at Rainbow Jewelers, the store also repairs and cleans jewelry, and updates vintage items.

"Someone might come in to update Grandma's ring," Nice said. "Maybe they'll give it a



The outside of Rainbow Jewelers in Kingston.

Sean McKeag | Times Leader

new setting to keep that sentimental value but bring it into the 21st century."

The family and staff look at

the people who visit them as more than customers, Mama Rose said.

"They talk about their happy

times and their heartaches," she said. "We laugh with them; we cry with them. It's not just a jewelry store."

PERFORMANCE KIA'S FRED BENSON: BEST AUTO SALESPERSON

Making car-buying as fun as possible

By Patrick Kernan
pkernan@timesleader.com

MOOSIC — At this rate, Fred Benson is going to run out of room to display his awards.

The 48-year-old Kingston man just won the title of the best auto salesperson in the area for the third time by Times Leader readers, and he said Performance Kia is trying to figure out the best way to display those won by the dealership itself.

But that's not what it's all about, Benson would surely say.

"It's all about the customer," he said. "They're like family."

Benson has been involved in auto sales since 2001, and has been working at Performance Kia, located at 4225 Birney Ave., Moosic, since shortly after its opening in 2015.

In the ensuing years, Benson has developed his own way of selling cars.

"You have to joke with the customer, make them like you," he said. "You have 30 seconds to make a good impression."

Apparently, that's something that Benson is very good at doing, since he said the vast majority of his customers are either people who have bought cars from him before, or have been referred to him by some of his repeat customers.

Benson said the key



Fred Adams | For Times Leader

Fred Benson sits at his desk at Performance Kia in Moosic. Benson was voted best auto salesperson by Times Leader readers.

is being honest with the customer.

"The best price isn't always the best deal," he said. Benson acknowledged that Performance Kia might not always be selling a car for the lowest price, but when considering what you get in the package — the car, service options and more — it'll get you the best deal.

Unlike the stereotypical "used car salesman," Benson isn't going to promise you the world. If he tells you he can get you something, he means

"It's all about customer service. I put my cellphone number on my business cards, and emails go right to my phone. If I don't answer you, it's because I'm with another customer."

Fred Benson

it.

"I'll try to exceed what I promise, but I'll always be honest," he said.

And when he's being honest, he likes to have a bit of fun, too.

Benson said that he's friends with many of his customers on Facebook, and even gives things

away to some of his favorite customers.

"My wife and I are season ticket holders with the (Wilkes-Barre/Scranton) Penguins," Benson said. "We'll see how many tickets we have unused, and give them out to some people. We'll all sit in the same

section, it's like a family."

Benson also said he jokes around with them in other ways.

"Sometimes before I sign a deal, I'll tell them, 'There's one more thing you gotta do.'" He took a dramatic pause and said, "You have to bring me a dozen Krispy Kreme donuts."

This sort of lightheartedness keeps the automobile-buying process fun, Benson says.

A family man himself, with a stepdaughter and two grandkids, Benson knows the importance of

a personal touch.

"It's all about customer service," he said. "I put my cellphone number on my business cards, and emails go right to my phone. If I don't answer you, it's because I'm with another customer."

Ultimately, Benson brought his success at Performance Kia back to the golden rule.

"You have to treat the customer like you want to be treated," he said.

If believe him, it's a recipe for success — and the occasional dozen of donuts.

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F.M. KIRBY CENTER: BEST ENTERTAINMENT VENUE, BEST MUSIC VENUE

Facility back in the spotlight

By **Brigid Edmunds**
bedmunds@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — The F.M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts has been a standout in the community for decades.

The historic entertainment venue has amassed a plethora of awards in the past, and is in the spotlight again for winning a pair of Times Leader Readers' Choice Award as best entertainment venue and best music venue.

Director of sales and marketing Anne Rodella said there is a combination of things that contribute to the center's success.

"I think what makes us stand out is our staff, the performers we bring in and the audience," she said.

She said the staff of the Kirby Center works like a "caring, loving well-oiled machine," to bring in as many acts as they do throughout the year.

Rodella said the variety of the acts that come through the building allow a diverse audience to come into the venue, and allows them to reach different demographics, as well as the frequency some bigger artists come to the area such as Alice Cooper and Jerry Seinfeld.

"Many of these big-name artists just keep coming back," she said.



The F.M. Kirby Center.



The chandelier theatre at the Kirby center.

"I think what makes us stand out is our staff, the performers we bring in and the audience."

Anne Rodella
Kirby Center's director of sales and marketing

marketing the shows that come to the center, maintaining the brand of the Kirby and working on posters and in-house materials, as well as managing marketing and sales to make sure the theater is hitting the goals and numbers they need to.

And while she's passionate about her work, she said there is so much within the organization for every employee to find a passion — from the history of the building, to the arts and even being a part of the fabric of downtown, Rodella said there are many passions alive within the organization.

"I think we're lucky," she said.

And she said the downtown community certainly contributes to the success of the Kirby.

To be consistently recognized by the community for their work, Rodella said it's amazing.

"We're thankful," she said.

"The support from everyone in the community makes you very thankful."

But it's the audience, donors and the support they give that stand out to the staff of the Kirby.

"We have a really love following in the community," Rodella said.

"Our success is owed to the people."

Rodella said the ability to program a wide variety, as well as a large number of acts, gives the center "staying power."

"Every year, it's more shows, more entertainment," she said.

"The variety is increasing."

Beyond the variety of the shows, Rodella said the staff's passion brings the building to life.

In her current role, Rodella is in charge of

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

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'Four-paw' pet accommodations

By Brigid Edmunds
bedmunds@timesleader.com

PITTSBURGH — Some say Maxwell's House has gone to the dogs.

The tenants — and owners — are just fine with that.

Maxwell's, touted as a "four-paw pet resort," was started by husband and wife Liz and Dave Nayavich, along with Dave's sister, Stevi, 3 years ago. Maxwell's House is a full-service facility for both cats and dogs.

"It's not like a typical kennel," Liz said.

"We try to make it a homier feel."

It's that homier feel that helped Maxwell's win best kennel in the fifth annual Times Leader Readers' Choice Awards.

The business started after Liz came home from Penn State, where she was pre-veterinary student.

"When I came home, I didn't know what I want-



Brigid Edmunds photos | Times Leader

Stevi Nayavich, right, shears Coco while Liz Nayavich gives a helping hand.

ed to do," she said.

Stevi had a job as a groomer, and got Liz a job. Liz also worked as a vet tech in Kingston. From there, Liz said she and Stevi started a mobile grooming company out of Liz's mother's basement, which would grow into

Maxwell's House.

"It was kind of the perfect storm," Liz said. Her father owned the land that Maxwell's sits on. Her father-in-law, Dave and Stevi's father, helped build the resort.

"I owe a ton to my parents," Liz said.

"There's nothing really like this in the area," Stevi said.

So they opened Maxwell's House in March 2015, the company named after Liz's husky rescue.

Liz and Stevi were able to build a steady client base through the mobile grooming, and said after they opened, were able to branch out through both social media and word of mouth.

"We're so lucky," Dave said.

The resort has three different aspects: overnight boarding, grooming and daycare.

For guests boarding their four-legged friends, Maxwell's House has small, standard and Deluxe/VIP suites to accommodate any size dog. Each room has a raised bed, and the VIP suites offer television for the dogs.

"Luxury boarding, we

like to call it," Liz said.

"So it's as close to being home as possible."

As a family of animal lovers, the trio said the decision to go into this line of work made sense. And with the support from their families and customers, the business keeps growing year after year.

"All of our customers are amazing," Liz said.

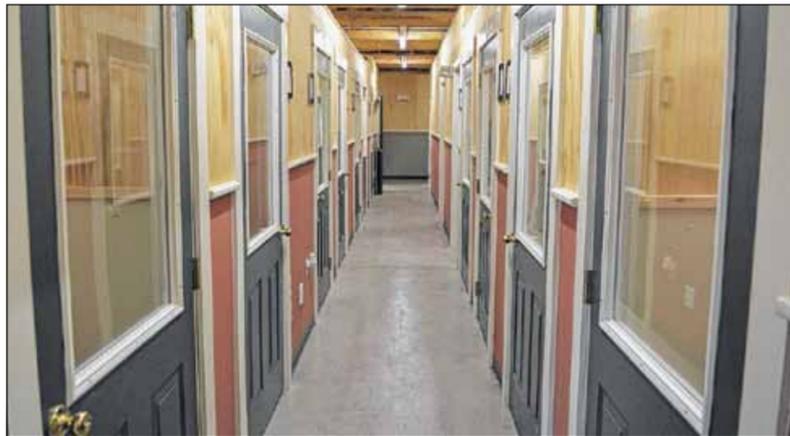
"It's been amazing."

Liz said their clients, both the residents who bring their animals and the animals themselves, have become like family.

"There are clients who come every day," Liz said.

The Nayavich family has turned Maxwell's House into their second home, and say they make it as close to home as possible for all the animals who inhabit it every day.

"We're all in," Dave said.



Maxwell's House's 4,000-plus-square-yard facility holds 28 rooms.

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Winners

From page 45

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Silver
Harvest Buffet

Best Burger

Gold
Booyah Burger
Silver
Red Robin

Best Butcher

Gold
Plains Meat Market
Silver
Fetch's

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Comcast
Silver
Service Electric

Best Carpet

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Giant
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Carpet Clearance

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Platinum
Mohegan Sun
Silver
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Best Caterer

Gold
The Alden Room at R Bar

Silver

Just Fred's Catering

Best Cheesesteak

Gold
Philadelphia Subs,
Wilkes Barre
Silver
Crabby's Seafood Grill

Best Childcare

Place
Gold
Cookie Corner
Silver
Building Blocks

Best Children's

Clothing Store
Gold
Reruns Consignment
Silver
Humphreys Childrens
Apparel

Best Chiropractor

Platinum
Cohen and Haydu
Chiropractic Clinic
Silver
Dr. Webb

Best Clothing

Boutique
Gold
Reruns Consignment
Silver
Showroom 56

Best Clothing

Store
Gold
Reruns Consignment
Silver
Kohl's

Best Coffee

Shop
Platinum
Dunkin' Donuts
Silver
Curry Donuts in Dallas

Best Community

College
Platinum
LCCC
Silver
Keystone

Best Computer

Repair
Gold
Best Buy
Silver
NEPA Geeks, Wilkes-Barre

Best

Consignment

Shop
Gold
Reruns Consignment
Silver
Lollipopsh

See WINNERS | 50

Platinum Winner

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Winners

From page 49

- Best Convenience Store**
Platinum
Turkey Hill in Plains Township
- Best Credit Union**
Gold
UFCW
- Best Dance Studio**
Gold
Joan Harris
- Best Deli**
Gold
J & J Deli
- Best Dentist**
Gold
Dr. Loren Grossman
- Best Dog Groomer**
Gold
Groomingdell's
- Best Dog Kennel**
Gold
Maxwell's House
- Best Dry Cleaner**
Gold
Masters Garment Cleaners
- Best Electrician**
Gold
Dave Monk Electric
- Best Employer over 50 employees**
Gold
Wegmans
- Best Fitness Facility**
Gold
Planet Fitness
- Best Fitness Instructor**
Gold
Debbie Grossman
- Best Florist**
Gold
Mattern's
- Best Fresh Food Market**
Gold
Weis, Plains Township
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Gold
Corcoran Funeral Home Inc.
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- Best Gift Shop**
Gold
River Oils Gifts
- Best Golf Course**
Gold
Fox Hill Country Club
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Gold
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- Best Fitness Facility**
Gold
Planet Fitness
- Best Fitness Instructor**
Gold
Debbie Grossman
- Best Florist**
Gold
Mattern's
- Best Fresh Food Market**
Gold
Weis, Plains Township
- Best Funeral Parlor**
Gold
Corcoran Funeral Home Inc.
- Best Furniture Store**
Gold
Raymour & Flanigan
- Best Gift Shop**
Gold
River Oils Gifts
- Best Golf Course**
Gold
Fox Hill Country Club
- Best Granite Store**
Gold
Penn Granite Cabinetry

Winners

From page 50

- Best Energy Company**
Gold
UGI
- Best Employer under 50 employees**
Gold
Dr. Loren Grossman
- Best Eyecare Center**
Platinum
Eyecare Specialists
- Best Family Doctor**
Gold
Dr. Pat Kilduff
- Best Local Jewelry Store**
Platinum Winner
Rainbow Jewelers
- Best Local Firearms Dealer**
Platinum Winner
Advanced Arms, LLC
- Best Lighting Store**
Platinum Winner
Friedman Electric Lighting Design Center
- Best Home Healthcare**
Platinum Winner
Erwine
- Best Hearing Aid Center**
Platinum Winner
Family Hearing Center
- Best Heavy Equipment Company**
Platinum Winner
Medico Industries

- Best Entertainment Venue**
Gold
F.M. Kirby Center
- Best Eyecare Center**
Platinum
Eyecare Specialists
- Best Family Doctor**
Gold
Dr. Pat Kilduff
- Best Local Jewelry Store**
Platinum Winner
Rainbow Jewelers
- Best Local Firearms Dealer**
Platinum Winner
Advanced Arms, LLC
- Best Lighting Store**
Platinum Winner
Friedman Electric Lighting Design Center
- Best Home Healthcare**
Platinum Winner
Erwine
- Best Hearing Aid Center**
Platinum Winner
Family Hearing Center
- Best Heavy Equipment Company**
Platinum Winner
Medico Industries

- Best Entertainment Venue**
Gold
F.M. Kirby Center
- Best Eyecare Center**
Platinum
Eyecare Specialists
- Best Family Doctor**
Gold
Dr. Pat Kilduff
- Best Local Jewelry Store**
Platinum Winner
Rainbow Jewelers
- Best Local Firearms Dealer**
Platinum Winner
Advanced Arms, LLC
- Best Lighting Store**
Platinum Winner
Friedman Electric Lighting Design Center
- Best Home Healthcare**
Platinum Winner
Erwine
- Best Hearing Aid Center**
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Family Hearing Center
- Best Heavy Equipment Company**
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See WINNERS | 51

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Winners

From page 51

Best Hair Salon

Gold
The Sapphire Salon
Silver
Signatures

Best Happy Hour

Gold
Arena Bar & Grill
Silver
River Grill

Best Health Insurance Provider

Gold
Highmark
Silver
Geisinger

Best Hearing Aid Center

Platinum
Family Hearing Center
Silver
The Hearing Center



Sean McKeag | Times Leader

The Sapphire Salon won the Times Leader Readers' Choice Award for best hair

Best Heating Oil Company

Gold
Lokuta's Fuel Service
Silver
Capozucca

Best Heavy Equipment Company

Platinum
Medico
Silver
Dominic's

Best Home Builder

Platinum
Summit Pointe Builders
Silver
Hallmark

Best Home Healthcare

Platinum
Erwine Home Health Care
Silver
Bayada

Best Hospital

Platinum
Geisinger
Silver
General Hospital

Best Imported Car Dealer

Gold
Kia Performance
Silver
Wyoming Valley Motors

Best Insurance Provider

Gold
Kathleen McGuigan, Scranton
Geico
Silver
Jeffery Roth, Farmers in Kingston

Best Internet Provider

Gold
Penn Tele Data
Silver
Comcast

Best Italian Food

Platinum
Café Italia
Silver
Cork Bar & Restaurant

Best Kitchen Store

Gold
Top Value Kitchens
Silver
Bed Bath & Beyond

See WINNERS | 55

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Frank A. Bucci, Jr., MD

Despite numerous advertising campaigns whether they tout low pricing, combined experience or convenient locations you owe it to yourself to base the decision on fact and logic. There are significant differences in the caliber of surgeon and surgical technology you'll receive.

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This year marks Dr. Bucci's 20 year Anniversary having established Bucci Laser Vision Cataract and Refractive Eye Center in 1998. He himself, has performed over 15,500 refractive and 35,000 microsurgical eye procedures in our state of the art private LASIK suite and Ambulatory Surgery Center. In addition to having over 95 articles published in medical publications and industry journals he was also voted as one of the Top 50 Ophthalmologists in the U.S. by his peers (Cataract and Refractive Surgery Today). He has also gained recognition and frequently lectures on the appropriate patient

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The participation in clinical trials is also recognition of a skilled surgeon and staff. Industry leaders call upon the best surgeons with the most outstanding results in order to carry out their studies which have been, or are in the process of, receiving FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approval. Dr. Bucci and his staff contribute valuable research to numerous ongoing clinical trials, as well as assisted in the FDA approval of numerous medical advancements in the industry.

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Dr. Loren Grossman, whose practice of family dentistry in Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley began in 1984, is also this region's leading cosmetic dentist. His patients rely on him for their complete oral health care, from routine checkups and hygiene to complex dental procedures, smile makeovers, veneers and tooth whitening.

Dr. Grossman's commitment to patient comfort and community responsibility was recognized in 2008 when the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce presented him its "Pride of Place Award" following the creative remodeling of his Kingston office and recognition for his dedication and support with being awarded "Outstanding Volunteer" for Volunteers in Medicine in 2015.

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Winners

From page 52

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MRAK U-Less Landscaping & Lawn Care Silver

Edward's Garden Center

Best Lasik Surgery Platinum

Bucci Laser Vision Silver

Eye Care Specialists

Best Laundromat Gold

Spots Be Gone Silver

Bennett St. Laundromat

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Fellerman and Ciarimboli Silver

Michael Bailey

Best Library Platinum

Hoyt Library Silver

Osterhout Library

Best Lighting Store Platinum

Friedman Electric Silver

The Factory

Best Local Ad Agency Gold

Halibut Blue Silver

ENX2 Marketing

Best Local Bar Gold

R Bar Silver

Crabby's Seafood Grill

Best Local BBQ Gold

Uncle Buck's BBQ Silver

BBQ by Barry

Best Local Chef Gold

Raw Henderson Silver

John Gottshall/Crabby's Seafood Grill

Best Local Chocolate Gold

Gertrude Hawk Silver

Michael Mootz Candies

Best Local College Gold

Wilkes University Silver

King's College

Best Local Firearms Dealer Platinum

Advanced Arms Silver

Bear's Gun Room

Best Local Garden Center Platinum

Edwards Silver

Dundee Gardens

Best Local Grocery Store Platinum

Gerrity's Silver

Weis

Best Local Home Improvement Gold

Driscoll's Home Center Silver

A&B Sunrooms and Remodel

Best Local Hotel Gold

Hilton Garden Inn Silver

Woodlands Inn & Resort

Best Local Insurance Agent Gold

Christie Bonnice, State Farm Agent

Best Local Jewelry Store Platinum

Rainbow Jewelers Silver

Bella & Co

Best Local Pharmacy Gold

Rite Aid, Plains Township Silver

CVS

Best Local Pierogi Gold

Mom & Pop's, Wilkes-Barre Silver

Just R Pierogies

Best Local Round Pizza Gold

Sabatini's Pizza Silver

Angelo's Pizzeria

Best Local Seafood Gold

Crabby's Seafood Grill Silver

Cooper's

Best Local Trucking Firm Gold

Ward Trucking Silver

Latona

Best Locksmith Platinum

Kingston Locksmith Silver

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Best Martinis Gold

Cork Bar & Restaurant Silver

R Bar & Grill

Best Maternity Ward Gold

Geisinger Silver

General Hospital

Best Mattress Store Gold

Mattress Warehouse Silver

Two Mattress Men

Best Micro Brewery Gold

Susquehanna Brewing Company Silver

Benny Brewing Co.

Best Music Venue Gold

F.M. Kirby Center Silver

The Pavilion at Montage Mountain

Best Nail Salon Gold

My Nails Silver

J. Madison Wellness Spa

Best New Car Dealer Gold

Performance Kia Silver

Wyoming Valley Motors

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The Mercy Center Silver

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Best Pediatrician Gold

Dr. Kile Silver

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Best Phone Company Platinum

Verizon Silver

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Best Photographer Gold

Diane Kivler Silver

Golden Photo

Best Place for a First Date Gold

Cork Bar & Restaurant Silver

Kevin's

Best Place for Family Fun Platinum

Knoebel's Silver

Electric City Escape, Scranton

Best Place for Outdoor Dining Gold

Cork Bar & Restaurant Silver

River Grill

Best Pool Company Gold

Olympic Pools Silver

Skovish Pools & Spas

Best Psychologist Gold

Dr Matthew Berger Best Real Estate Agency Gold

Lewith & Freeman Silver

Best Realtor Gold

Larissa Cleary, City Brokers LLC Silver

Tom Holland, The Agency Real Estate

Best Rehab Center Gold

Allied Services Silver

Riverside Rehabilitation Center

Best Remodeler Gold

Richard Bronson Silver

Relyt Construction

Best Restaurant Atmosphere Gold

Cork Bar & Restaurant Silver

Crabby's

Best Restaurant for Breakfast Gold

The Avenue Silver

Chuck's Main St. Diner

Best Restaurant Menu Gold

Cork Bar & Restaurant Silver

Crabby's Seafood Grill

See WINNERS | 62



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Blending old and new beer tastes

By Patrick Kernan
pkernan@timesleader.com

EDWARDSVILLE — Wyoming Valley Beverage has its feet firmly in two different time frames.

The store's manager, Lenny Cordora, 33, says things have changed a lot in the way people drink beer in recent years.

"With craft beer, things have really opened up," Cordora said, while showing a reporter around the aisles that stored what felt like miles of beer. "Beer is back."

Cordora manages the store while his father, Leonard, owns it. Cordora said the store, located at 63 S. Wyoming Ave., Edwarsville, has long been in his family's hands.

"I learned to walk here," he said with a laugh.

Growing up in the store, Cordora said he's seen plenty of trends come and go, but he said there's a major difference in the way younger generations buy beer.

"We'll have older people come in and get their case of Miller Lite, but the younger generations want to try more things," he said. "They'll buy a bunch of six-packs — sometimes as many as a case — but they just want to try new things."

So, Cordora said, when he began working as a manager at the store five years ago, he com-



Lenny Cordora inside his family's beverage store, Wyoming Valley Beverage, in Edwarsville.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader



Wyoming Valley Beverage in Edwarsville was voted best beer distributor by Times Leader readers.

mitted to bringing in those new things. And that is part of the reason that the store was voted

best beer distributor by Times Leader readers in the newspaper's annual Readers' Choice Awards.

The popularity of craft beer has exploded in recent years, allowing customers to sample fla-

vors they might not have ever considered before. And Cordora said it's his own love of craft beer that allowed Wyoming Valley Beverage to cater to the younger crowd.

"If it wasn't for me drinking craft beer, we probably wouldn't do this," he said.

But it's not all fancy craft beers for Wyoming Valley Beverage. As is to be expected, there are still cases of Miller, Coors, Budweiser, Corona and all the other classics.

Part of what makes Wyoming Valley Beverage great, Cordora says, is how organized it is. In fact, it's almost obsessively organized, as Cordora swapped bottles and

boxes on shelves to make the displays look better while he talked.

"The store is very shoppable," he said. "It's well-lit, it's clean; there's a family atmosphere."

And he wasn't lying about that last part. Numerous times during his conversation with the reporter, Cordora interrupted himself to say hi to a customer that just walked in. What's more, he knew all of their names.

"We're big on first-name basis here," he said.

Cordora also said the store holds the sort of events that are typically reserved for wineries: tastings. You can check out the store's [Facebook page](#) for information on the beer tastings and other events the store might be holding.

According to Cordora, working in this business is its own reward.

"I can't stress enough how fun it is," he said while continuing to straighten bottles around the store. "There's always new stuff."

Ultimately, if you were to ask why his store was voted the best, Cordora said it's the new spin he put on everything.

"A lot of distributors don't want to do this," he said. "So I thought, 'I'll do it.' And we're still making money."

Reach Patrick Kernan at 570-991-6386 or on Twitter @PatKernan

We, at Medico Industries, say *thank you* to the faithful readers at the Times Leader and to everyone who voted for the 2018 Reader's Choice Awards.

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SABATINI'S: BEST BEER, BEST ROUND PIZZA

Beer here, there and everywhere, pizza too

By Jerry Lynott
jlynott@timesleader.com

EXETER — Growing up and working in the family pizza shop kept Lindo Sabatini busy, especially on weekends. “My whole family, I have three brothers, none of us ever saw a Friday night football game,” Lindo, 44, said. “All of us were always in the restaurant.”

It hasn't changed much for him since he and his wife bought the restaurant at 1925 Wyoming Ave. in Exeter from his mother, Carol, and father, Joe Sabatini, in 2005 and 10 years later opened up Sabatini's Bottleshop & Beer Bar next door at 1901 Wyoming Ave. “I love what I do,” Lindo said, taking a break from his daily duties early one afternoon in late March.

Times Leader readers have noticed that devotion and voted Sabatini's as the best round pizza in this years readers' poll and the bottleshop as having the best selection of beers.

The restaurant dates back to his grandparents, John and Catherine Sabatini, and so does the pizza.

“As far as the original restaurant goes, we try not to change very much at all. The recipe is the original recipe from 1958,” Lindo said.

“This year is our 60th anniversary,” he said.

The menu has changed with the addition of



Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Lindo Sabatini, owner of Sabatini's Bottleshop & Bar in Exeter, guarantees he has a brew for people who say they don't like beer.

pasta, salads and wings, but the pizza is the focus.

Sabatini's faces competition from all directions in Northeastern Pennsylvania and has found its niche.

“People like the pizza that they grew up on and that they love,” Lindo said.

Some customers travel

from outside the Wyoming Valley to eat at the restaurant. “I have one family that's been coming here, their mother was local. But they would drive in once a week from Danville for pizza,” Lindo said.

Although it's more recent, the bottleshop holds a similar attraction.

Customers come for an hour or two away from the shop, giving it a reputation for having hard-to-find craft brews.

“We have over 3,000 beers out here,” Lindo said, referring to the former children's indoor play center that he converted into the bottleshop and bar.

Lindo proudly spoke of the selection and the knowledgeable staff, including himself, who can navigate customers, novice and experienced, through the aisles and coolers filled with specialty brews.

“Even if somebody says, ‘I don't like beer.’ I have a beer they're going

to like. I guarantee I have a beer they're going to like,” Lindo said.

“Nobody was born a beer drinker,” he said, noting he's developed into one.

“I've had a few beers,” Lindo said.

It's that development

See SABATINI'S | 61

Sabatini's

From page 60

that's put the bottleshop on the map. His connection with brewers, breweries, importers and fellow beer lovers keeps the selection fresh and customers satisfied.

“A lot of the specialty

beer (in the shop) is, ‘You've earned this,’” Lindo explained. “Since our volume is high with a lot of breweries, we're able to get a lot of their specialty beer based on our volume.”

Still the price of some of the beers causes sticker shock, and it's a challenge trying to introduce

“I have one family that's been coming here, their mother was local. But they would drive in once a week from Danville for pizza.”

Lindo Sabatini

people to new beers, he said.

“Some people say, ‘Oh, your prices are expen-

sive!’ Well our prices are not expensive. Some of the beers we offer may be expensive beers. But

the same exact beer in Philadelphia will be 30 percent more,” Lindo said.

As a reminder, he said the shop is still a business and his profit margins are much tighter than similar sized stores in larger metropolitan areas.

Even with thousands

of different beers for sale people come in asking for something that's not in stock. It's a daily occurrence, Lindo said.

But, he doesn't want to see them leave empty handed. “I turn them to something that's close,” he said.

Reach Jerry Lynott at 570-991-6120 or on Twitter @TLJerryLynott.

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Silver
Vino's Deli

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Gold
Mirakuya
Silver
Katana

Best Tailor

Gold
Alterations by Liza
Silver
Kranson's

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Gold
Crabby's Seafood Grill
Silver
R Bar & Grill

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Heatwave by Atomic Tan
Silver
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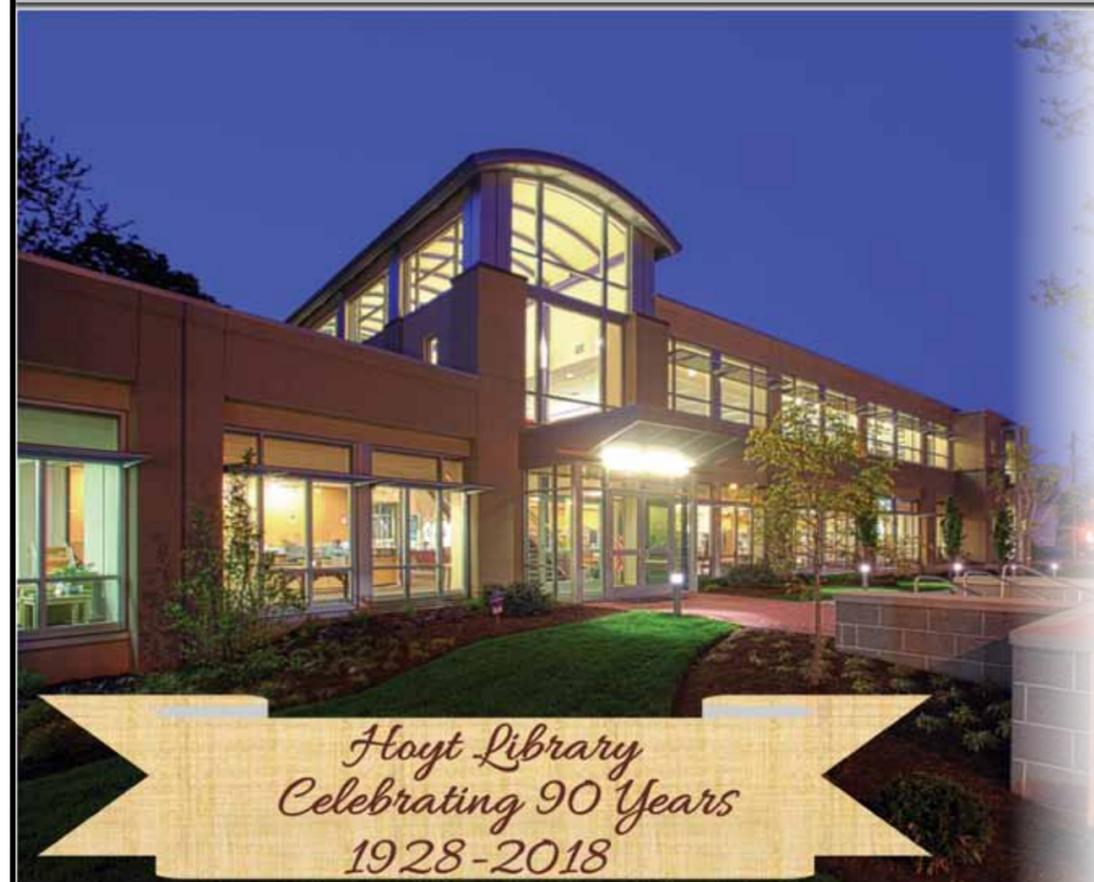
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