



SEASONAL BLAHS

Steelers, Browns get left out in the cold

SPORTS, B1



NATIVITY SEEN

Dozens witness church's outdoor display

LOCAL & STATE, A3



Salvation Army hopes for more jingle in the kettles

By SEAN BARRON
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YOUNGSTOWN

When you're out and about this week and pass a Salvation Army bell ringer next to a red kettle, take an extra moment to make a small contribution.

That's the challenge Maj. Lurlene-Kay Johnson is hoping Mahoning County residents will take on as the Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign winds down.

Johnson, the organization's area coordinator pro tem, said the campaign, which got under way around Thanksgiving, has raised a little more than \$200,000 in the county. The effort, however, is about \$30,000 short compared with last year

PEOPLE WHO NEVER THOUGHT THEY'D NEED HELP FROM THE SALVATION ARMY NOW NEED HELP."

MAJ. LURLENE-KAY JOHNSON, Salvation Army

and needs to come up with \$300,000 by Friday to fund the agency's programs and operations for next year,

Nevertheless, the goal can be reached if each person in the county who passes a red kettle donates \$1, she noted, adding that kettles are at area Walmart, Giant Eagle and other big-box and smaller stores, as well as numerous restaurants and businesses.

"You make most of your money about 10 days before Christmas," observed Johnson, of Cleveland, who came to the Valley in mid-November to assist with local fund-raising efforts.

Most of the money will be used to cover the Salvation Army's distribution costs and to give out toys and food vouchers, she continued. It

See KETTLES, A4

Austintown district's new program gives students an alternative

Online, on course



ROBERT K. YOSAY | THE VINDICATOR

Sophomore Nate Masterson and program coordinator Janet Polish work on assignments online at the new alternative school at Fitch High School. "Everyone is going to start doing this because everyone is losing their own kids," Polish said.

By KRISTINE GILL
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AUSTINTOWN

SCHOOL WASN'T MOVING fast enough for Nate Masterson.

The Fitch High School sophomore enrolled in the new alternative-school program so he could learn at his own pace.

"I wanted to be ahead," he said. "I wanted to learn more, faster."

Nate is one of about 70 students in the Austintown school district who have opted for the K-12 online program. Any student can enroll, and they choose to for a variety of reasons.

"There are 70-some students and 70-some reasons why they're doing it," said Janet Polish, coordinator of alternative-school and online programs. She also is the principal

of this new program.

Polish was part-time principal of the alternative program that existed for seven years before this school year. That program offered nontraditional school hours where students could come in from 3 to 6 p.m. after the regular school day to receive their education. Coursework was not done online, and students usually had behavioral or academic problems that forced them out of the classroom.

"We opened up the possibilities with this program," Polish said, adding that it was necessary considering the number of competing charter and online schools.

"Everyone is going to start doing this because everyone is losing their own kids," she said.

See SCHOOL, A5



Students can use computers housed in two trailers near the high school.

Menu includes helping needy

Cafeteria workers continue tradition

By KRISTINE GILL
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AUSTINTOWN

Cafeteria workers at Austintown Middle School don't want to exchange gifts anymore — but not because they don't like one another.

"There are so many kids who don't have anything, and everyone does all these exchanges," said cafeteria manager Shelley Chine.

So for the past three years, the 14 women along with four other AMS staff members instead have adopted Austintown families in need.

"It's exciting to wake up Christmas morning and know another family has a Christmas too," Chine added.



Chine

On Friday, several cafeteria workers shopped at Austintown Plaza to grab some last-minute items on the wish lists for two families adopted this year.

"These are really nice shoes," Darlene Wiery said, grabbing a box along the back wall at J.C. Penney.

"I think that's too small," Chine said of another pair before grabbing the winning box.

"I like this; do you guys like this?" she asked.

Surprisingly, all eight women did.

"It's easy to agree when it's a good cause," Debbie Pratt said after everyone had sorted through the options

See HELPING, A4

The Vindicator

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PLEASE RECYCLE



inside today

BEREAVEMENT MINISTRY

A local church's bereavement ministry helps survivors cope with holidays.

LOCAL & STATE, A3

CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

Shopping days left: **5**

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Valley schoolchildren learn diversity this holiday season

By KRISTINE GILL
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NORTH JACKSON

The Christmas stockings decorating Kathy Wetzl's third-grade classroom saw a rare juxtaposition last week as students learned about Hanukkah.

"I learned we have Hanukkah eight days," said Jackson-Milton Elementary student Madison Fowler.

Madison had a front-row seat during the lesson taught by Cindy Fiol, an intervention specialist at the school whose husband is Jewish. Though many public schools focus on Christmas this time of year, the lesson was

part of an effort to educate students about other celebrations.

"I think there's a lot of prejudice around, and it doesn't have to be racial, but it can be based on religion or anything in life," Fiol said. "I think that if children are exposed to something and learn a little bit ... it can bridge the gaps between groups of people."

During the lesson, students learned the basic premise of the holiday, helped to light a menorah and played with tiny wooden dreidels. Fiol gave

See DIVERSITY, A4



RAMI DAUD | THE VINDICATOR

Jackson-Milton Elementary student Raenah Rader, 8, plays with a dreidel as part of a presentation on the history and customs of the Jewish holiday Hanukkah.



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