



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

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# THE NEWS-ITEM

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## CSIU OFFERS HOPE

# Free nursing program to boost income of families

BY SARAH DESANTIS  
THE NEWS-ITEM  
sarah\_d@newsitem.com

MILTON — A free program that trains low-income residents to start careers in nursing is gearing up for its seventh year at the Central Susquehanna

Intermediate Unit (CSIU). The WATCH (Work Attributes Toward Careers in Health) Project seeks to lift families out of poverty while helping the health-care industry fill an seemingly endless demand for qualified nurses.

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# YES to the Future program connects adolescents with job

BY SARAH DESANTIS  
THE NEWS-ITEM  
sarah\_d@newsitem.com

MILTON — The Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) is seeking to smooth the often tumultuous transition of entering the workforce for adolescents.

Young adults struggling to gain employment in an

industry they enjoy are invited to try the YES to the Future program, which combines career coaching and practical experience to connect young adults with careers.

The program is free and open to residents within the CSIU territory between 16 and 24 years of age. Participants can have any level of

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STEPHANIE BETTICK/STAFF PHOTOS

# SWEET RELEASE



Family and friends of Ava Mae Hauer gather together to release balloons in celebration of what would have been her fifth birthday at the Mother Cabrini baseball field in Springfield Monday. A banner was revealed and will remain at Mother Cabrini field all season in memory of Ava, a baseball player who enjoyed playing at the field as a member of the Challengers League. The daughter of Rebecca and Chadd Hauer passed away Feb. 4. Rebecca said everyone worked together to make the birthday celebration happen. A candle on the cake was blown out by Ava's sister, Haleigh, and floating lanterns were also released. LEFT: The banner hung in memory of Ava is revealed.

# Lourdes kids connect with class in Ireland

## Weekly communication part of growing global outreach foundation

BY STEPHANIE BETTICK  
THE NEWS-ITEM

stephanie\_b@newsitem.com

COAL TOWNSHIP — Students at Our Lady of Lourdes Regional are learning first hand how technology can take them anywhere and connect them with anyone.

Lourdes is one of 36 schools in a global partnership program through the JDO Foundation, through which they are communicating weekly with students at St. Brigid's Primary School in Ireland.

Chromebooks and iPads received from the foundation are advancing the education in Ann Czeponis' fourth-grade classroom and Tara Bregensir's third-grade classroom.

Bregensir said the program has broadened her experience as a



STEPHANIE BETTICK/STAFF PHOTO

**Fourth-grade Lourdes student Blaize Rosini connected with his partner at St. Brigid's Primary School in Ireland on Monday as part of Lourdes' global partnership program through JDO Foundation.**

think technology needs to be incorporated into more classrooms today."

### Mountain Dew and Lent

Her students were hard at work Monday learning to do research using the Chromebooks to help them with a paper on someone with which they would like to switch lives.

In Czeponis' classroom, students finished a computer math

program before logging into a Google classroom to connect with their partners in Ireland.

Kids eagerly put on their headphones and sent video chat invitations to their student partners. They excitedly discussed topics ranging from their favorite activities to if they have Mountain Dew in Ireland. Last week, their goal was to learn what their partners were giving up for Lent.

The two schools find common areas in their curricula that allows them to advance their lessons and work with each other. When they learned about writing friendly letters, they were able to exchange both snail mail and email.

Some students have enjoyed the experience so much that they communicate with their Irish partners outside of school, not

only through emails, but by playing PlayStation and Xbox games.

Czeponis loves seeing the connection between her students and those at St. Brigid.

"I hope that kids realize that kids all over the world have the same feelings they have. I hope they realize the blessings they have here, and that different cultural experiences are important," she said.

### Chickens in Kenya

The technology has allowed for further global outreach beyond the partnership program. Over the Christmas holiday, Czeponis said her classroom used Kiva, a micro-financing company, to donate \$50 to a man in Kenya who raises chickens to send his kids to school. The kids voted for the

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# Pennsylvania Senate Democrats resist ransom in cyberattack

BY MARC LEVY  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania's top state Senate Democrat said Monday that no ransom has been paid to resolve a "ransomware" cyberattack that shut down the caucus' network and prompted an FBI investigation.

Senate Democrats' computer network, including their email system, remained inaccessible Monday, three days after

the attack was discovered early Friday by information technology staff who received an alert that the network had been breached.

Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa, D-Allegheny, would not say what sort of ransom had been demanded, but he said no ransom had been paid, and he and other Senate Democrats said they were not inclined to pay a ransom.

"Right now we have no intention of dealing with

the demand," Costa said.

A ransomware attack is typically aimed at stealing sensitive information in an attempt to be paid for the data's return, often in a digital currency.

For the time being, Costa said, Senate Democrats were focused on trying to restore access to the network, which contains a wide range of documents, from policy work to constituent case files.

Sen. Daylin Leach, D-Montgomery, said the

hackers gave a one-week deadline to pay the ransom, or they would destroy the data. Costa said he could not say whether there was a ransom deadline.

But he also said that the caucus, as a matter of routine, backs up its emails, documents and data, much of it nightly, and that it could be loaded into the network once it is available and safe.

Microsoft was doing a forensic audit to try to fig-

ure out who penetrated the network and how, and Costa said the caucus may know more in the next day or two. Senators and staff who tried logging in initially received a message instructing them to click on a link for information on how to recover the data on their network.

Costa said the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh offices of the FBI were working on the case.

A spokeswoman at the FBI's Philadelphia office

said that, under Department of Justice policy, the agency will not provide any update on an ongoing investigation unless or until charges are filed.

Leach said his office has lost access to all of the paperwork on file for constituent requests and the state grants he was trying to get for his district.

"In the short-term, we can sort of make do," Leach said. "There are some problems long-term."

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CSIU

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Katherine A. Vastine, CSIU program manager who oversees the WATCH Project, said low-income residents enrolled in the program receive free tuition to a training program to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA), as well as reimbursement of the certification exam fees, two sets of scrubs, a pair of shoes and transportation assistance.

Tuition and certification costs alone total \$1,000, said Vastine.

The 120-hour training program can be completed in as few as 17 days. After receiving the certification, the participant immediately becomes eligible for CNA positions, which heavily populate nursing homes, hospitals and other health-care facilities. Vastine said CNAs typically make between \$12 and \$15 per hour.

“They key is, it’s employment,” she said.

There are no requirements for age or employment background to participate in the WATCH Program, but participants must commit to becoming employed as a CNA at the conclusion of the program. During the first five years of the program, which began in 2010, 98 percent of participants were employed upon graduation.

Though some participants enjoy CNA work, many desire to move up the nursing career ladder to become registered nurses (RN) or licensed practical nurses (LPN). Vastine said the CSIU works with these career-ambitious individuals to connect them with the necessary further education and help them balance working as a CNA while attending additional training.

Many WATCH Participants move up the nursing career ladder through another CSIU program, the Central Susquehanna LPN Career Center.

The LPN Center, located behind Giant in Lewisburg, provides the classroom theory and practical knowledge necessary to acquire an LPN license. LPNs still work beneath a doctor’s oversight but are granted a wider range of duties than a CNA.

The school was acquired by the CSIU 20 years ago, and will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year. Its 100th class of nurses graduated in July.

Kimberly A. Delbo, director of the LPN Center, said the program takes one year to complete full time and two years to complete part time. Tuition is \$17,000, and the CSIU works with applicants to source financial aid.

LPNs have a median income of



SARAH DESANTIS/STAFF PHOTO

**Kelli Winter, of Montoursville, practices auscultation with Kimberly A. Delbo, director of the Central Susquehanna LPN Career Center. Students at the school work with the mannequins to learn a variety of skills before externing at several area healthcare facilities. The LPN Center is run by the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit.**

\$43,000, with top earners making more than \$59,000, Delbo said.

“That’s a really nice income for one year of education,” she said.

Delbo considers herself a marker of the program’s success. The Kulpmont native recalled how she and her husband had been a young married couple with three children living on an income of just \$18,000 when she decided she would embark on a career in nursing.

“Nursing has changed my life,” she said.

The Susquehanna Valley has a high need for nurses, especially LPNs, said Delbo. She said more than 95 percent of graduates are employed as LPNs in the Susquehanna Valley within six months.

Students at the LPN Center complete externships at a variety of area hospitals and healthcare facilities including Geisinger Medical Center, Geisinger-Shamokin Area Community Hospital, River-Woods, ManorCare Health Services and Evangelical Community Hospital. Graduates also go on to work at nursing homes, prisons and schools.

Delbo cited a steady elderly population as a sign the job market would remain consistent.

“The care is needed,” she said. “The issue is not having enough care providers.”

Classes at the LPN Center run July to July for full-time students and January to January for part-time students. Delbo said the program is accepting applications for the upcoming full-time class until April 5.

CNAs hoping to advance their degrees have a second option through the CSIU. The CNA Apprenticeship program allows

CNAs to acquire training in specialty areas over a 12-month period while remaining employed.

Dr. John Kurelja, CSIU chief academic officer, said this program is key for breadwinners who would like to move their careers forward but cannot leave their job to attend school.

“This apprenticeship program allows them to work and learn on the job,” he said.

Program participants gain specialty knowledge in areas like geriatrics, dementia and monitoring. The educational experience is equivalent to 12 credits at the Pennsylvania College of Technology, said Kurelja.

All three programs are open to residents of the five counties covered by the CSIU, including Northumberland County.

Kurelja said the county’s close proximity to multiple major healthcare facilities, including Geisinger Medical Center, means the programs can have a big impact on poverty and employment.

“People aren’t aware these things are right in our backyard,” he said.

He said the CSIU recently helped a woman at its maternity home, Pinnacle Place, earn her GED. She then entered the YES to the Future program and discovered she had an interest in nursing and enrolled in the LPN Center for training. Today, she works as an LPN.

Though the CSIU is commonly connected to K-12 education, he said these adult education programs are equally as important.

“We get to provide services to the people who didn’t make it through the regular system,” he said.

THE NEWS-ITEM, SHAMOKIN, PA

YES

FROM PAGE 1

education experience, from incomplete high school to advanced degrees, but they cannot be enrolled in any academic institution while in the YES program.

Katherine A. Vastine, CSIU program manager, said participants in YES first undergo career counseling through Pennsylvania CareerLink to determine their areas of interest.

“We try to figure out, ‘What are you passionate about?’” she said.

Next, participants are enrolled in paid internships connected to their areas of interest. The internships allow the participants to gain experience in a career without major financial commitments. At the conclusion of the program, the participants can add the internship to their resumes, which allows them to overcome the hurdle of needing experience to get an entry-level job.

Zach Gass said he was working in an ailing chain of vapor shops when his aunt suggested the YES program to him. He had attended college for about a year and a half for biology and chemistry before dropping out and taking the job at the vapor shop, and felt with that employment coming to an end the time had come for him to get serious about a career.

“I wanted to reevaluate and figure out my new path,” he said.

Gass had always been interested in computers but had no formal training, not even high school courses. He was attracted to the idea of taking his hobby and turning it into a career in technology but needed a way to gain experience in the field.

“The whole idea of the experience of the YES program is what got me into it,” he said.

Gass is now in the midst of an eight-week internship at the CSIU funded by the YES program. His internship assignments have moved him through many of the departments of the CSIU and allowed him to job shadow workers with careers he may like.

In addition to typical internship labor tasks like changing

light bulbs — he said he never realized how many different types of light bulbs could be in one building until he had this job — he worked in areas like receiving and shipping and information technology. Currently, he is working on a project researching fleet management software that will be implemented to oversee the CSIU’s vehicles.

Marca O’Hargan, a CSIU career counselor who works out of CareerLink, said YES program interns have been placed at a variety of businesses and organizations including the Gate House, a homeless shelter in Danville; State Farm, in Sunbury; and a Salvation Army Thrift Store.

“You try to match the interest of the participant with what they want to further explore,” added Vastine.

Often the internships turn into a job, O’Hargan said. A YES program participant interested in fitness who was placed at Planet Fitness was hired on following the conclusion of the internship. A participant who wished to explore technology and interned at CSP Office Equipment now works at the Shamokin business full time.

Dr. John Kurelja, CSIU chief academic officer, said grant funding pays the intern’s \$8 per hour wage so employers only need to commit to spending time training and educating the intern.

“It makes it easy for an employer to take on the employee,” he said.

The CSIU and CareerLink continue to provide support services, like help with financial aid, affording uniforms and transit and obtaining clearances, to YES program participants after the internship has concluded.

The program has rolling admission, and anyone between 16 and 24 is encouraged to apply. Vastine said people are sometimes hesitant to apply because they feel they will not be accepted. Though the program has a filtering process, she said the administrators are eager to find applicants who truly want to make a change in their lives.

“Don’t rule yourself out,” she said. “Apply for the program and we’ll go through the process with you.”

Ireland

FROM PAGE 1

man on a Google form with three different borrowers, and are now able to follow how he is doing and how he is repaying their loan.

“That mission of helping others and reaching out to others in different countries is always a part of what we do here at Lourdes,” Czeponis said. “But this (program) puts a face on kids from other countries, and (St. Brigid’s) does missionary work as well, so they get to talk about those kind of things.”

The JDO Foundation

As a pilot program in 2015, JDO featured 17 schools. It has grown to 36 schools, and is looking to grow by 10 U.S. schools and 10 European schools by the fall, according to Heather Rooney, CEO of project development.

She attributes the success of the program to the teachers.

“This is a teacher-driven program, and so truly, the success of the program is built on the excitement and dedication of the teachers involved,” Rooney said.

JDO Foundation founder Judy Coon was a teacher for 25 years and had a dream of creating a global outreach program. Upon

the death of her father, she inherited money that was used to start the foundation.

Rooney said, “This was her dream, to provide technology, professional development and the opportunity for global collaboration among students.”

Russett Goulding, educational technology specialist, said global partners are in Rome, England, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Wales, and U.S. schools in Colorado, Missouri, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Texas.

The foundation started by serving schools largely in the Denver area, providing one-on-one technology and network support for schools. Coons loves traveling and wanted to share that experience with children who may otherwise not get to travel. Her vision is to have two schools in every partner country and two schools in each state in the U.S.

Goulding said, “This really lets kids understand that people in other countries aren’t scary and really are people just like them with a different culture,” she said. “It enriches their whole global perspective, and we think that’s really important.”



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Tara Bregensir’s third-grade classroom at Our Lady of Lourdes Regional use Chromebooks from the JDO Foundation to assist with their learning and to connect with year-four students at St. Brigid’s Primary School in Ireland.**



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