

DIFFICULT DISTANCING
Prison inmate groups warn of 'inevitable' outbreak. B5



Missing moments
College seniors try to squeeze in memories. B6

Standard-Speaker



We're *All* About It

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2020

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CONTINUING CORONAVIRUS COVERAGE

Statewide cases rise by 643, a one-day high



LINSEY SHUEY / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Johnathan Palmer, Shenandoah Heights, fills a man's cart with food at the Beverly Mattson Memorial Food Bank distribution at the J.W. Cooper Community Center in Shenandoah on Saturday.

STAFF WIRE REPORTS

Luzerne County has jumped to 95 COVID-19 cases, with 29 added to its total Sunday. Carbon County added six positive cases and Schuylkill County has five new positive cases, the state's department of health announced Sunday.

Schuylkill County now has 21 cases. Carbon County's total tripled to nine overnight.

It is unknown exactly how many cases are in Greater Hazleton, but Hazleton Mayor Jeff Cusat said Saturday he knows of at least 10 cases in the city.

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- Crisis drives demand for locally produced products. **A10**

case March 22. Carbon County announced its first case Tuesday.

Luzerne County had two deaths last week. Nearby Lackawanna County's total is now 56 positive COVID-19 cases. Lackawanna has reported two deaths from the virus last week.

Statewide there were 643 new cases announced Sunday, a one-day high, bringing the total to 3,394 positive cases. Officially, there have been 38 deaths as a result of the virus.

The first positive case in Luzerne County was announced March 15 and the first in Hazleton was confirmed March 21. Schuylkill County had its first reported

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Tamaqua shop 'gives back' with 200 pizzas

BY JILL WHALEN
STAFF WRITER

TAMAQUA — Tommy's Italian Specialty Shop was busy Sunday morning as hundreds arrived to pick up pizza pies — pies that they hadn't even ordered.

The popular eatery near the five points intersection gave the unbaked pies out for free.

"It was our idea," said Justine Secara, who operates the popular eatery with her husband, Jim Secara. "We figured we can't be the only people who are struggling but at least

we do know that we have to be better off than some people."

Like other restaurants, Tommy's has seen a drop in business after having to close its dining area because of COVID-19 restrictions. It is open for only takeouts.

"The community supported our business for 25 years and this is our way to give back to them," said Jim, whose parents, Jim and Jean Secara, own Tommy's.

The pizzas were going like hotcakes.

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JILL WHALEN / STAFF PHOTO

Employee Jen Lockard ladles sauce onto one of the 200-plus pizzas handed out to the community Sunday morning from Tommy's Italian Specialty Shop in Tamaqua.



SUBMITTED BY MONIKA BENE'SOVA

Students from the Secondary School of Informatics and Tourism Kolin in the Czech Republic take a trip to Braga, Portugal.

CZECH CONNECTION

Former exchange student hopes to create virtual pen pals

BY AMANDA CHRISTMAN
STAFF WRITER

More than 25 years ago, Monika Bene'sova' swam with the Hazleton Area Cougars swim team.

She was an exchange student from Czech Republic, spending 10 months in the Hazleton area.

"So I was living as an American teenager," she said.

"With American parents," and siblings, too.

And, while her stay was brief, Bene'sova', now a teacher, returned as a virtual pen pal after COVID-19 took students out of traditional classrooms, asking the Standard-Speaker to lend a hand.

She's trying to connect her 17 to 19 years old students, with peers in the United States — right here in Hazleton, creating online pen pals.

Bene'sova' teaches at Secondary School of Informatics and Tourism Kolin.

She hopes by communicating with American teens, her students can sharpen their English speaking skills. But, both groups of students can learn from each other and spend their time away from school in a positive way by chatting online.

"Our kids are very friendly. They may be shy at first but they're really excited (to connect with teenagers in the U.S.)," Bene'sova' said.

Perhaps, they can take on projects together to occupy their minds with something other than COVID-19, too, like

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Trump extends shutdown expecting big death toll

Public health experts suggest to the president that the pandemic could claim more than 100,000 lives in the U.S.

BY ZEKE MILLER
AND JILL COLVIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Bracing the nation for a grim death toll, President Donald Trump on Sunday extended the voluntary national shutdown for a month, bowing to public-health experts who told him the coronavirus pandemic could claim over

100,000 lives in the U.S., perhaps significantly more, if not enough is done to fight it.

It was a stark shift in tone by the president, who only days ago mused about the country reopening in a few weeks. From the Rose Garden, he said his Easter revival hopes had only been "aspirational."

The initial 15-day period of

social distancing urged by the federal government expires Monday and Trump had expressed interest in relaxing the national guidelines at least in parts of the country less afflicted by the pandemic. But instead he decided to extend them through April 30, a tacit acknowledgment he'd been too optimistic. Many states and local governments have stiffer controls in place on mobility and gatherings.

Trump's impulse to restore normalcy met a sober

reality check Sunday from Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, who said the U.S. could experience more than 100,000 deaths and millions of infections from the pandemic. Trump's decision to extend the guidelines reflected a recognition that the struggle will take place over the longer haul and the risk of deaths spiraling into the hundreds of thousands is real.

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On this **National Doctors' Day**, we thank all of our doctors.
You are our heroes.



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Alexa Soto Bernabe
Hazleton

WEATHER

Cloudy
High of 53

B5