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Jefferson Health CEO Dr. Joseph G. Cacchione speaks July 14 during Lehigh Valley Health Network's ceremonial ribbon-cutting at LVHN-Tower Place. Cacchione said planning for The Woman's Health Center at Tower Place was done after LVHN and Jefferson Health merged a year ago. **APRIL GAMIZ/THE MORNING CALL**

LVHN-Jefferson one year later

CEO says merger has benefited Lehigh Valley, lists top accomplishments

By **Leif Greiss**
The Morning Call

One year has passed since Lehigh Valley Health Network merged with Jefferson Health, creating one of the largest health care networks in the country.

With 32 hospitals, more than 700 outpatient locations and enough employees to populate a small city, integration and restructuring have been a major undertaking. Yet the new network had some major wins this year.

The Morning Call recently spoke to Dr. Joseph Cacchione, CEO of Jefferson Health, about what he believes are the biggest accomplishments of the network



Cacchione

of Jefferson's Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center, has added chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy as one of the services it offers. It also has started offering liver transplants thanks to Jefferson. Jefferson, in turn, has benefited from LVHN's bone marrow transplant program.

and what is to come.

Cacchione said despite fears and concerns that the Lehigh Valley and the legacy LVHN organization would become second fiddle to the Philadelphia region, that hasn't been the case. Lehigh Valley Topper Cancer Institute, now part of Jefferson's Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center, has added chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy as one of the services it offers. It also has started offering liver transplants thanks to Jefferson. Jefferson, in turn, has benefited from LVHN's bone marrow transplant program.

Jefferson has committed to spending \$900 million over the next three years on facilities in the Lehigh Valley. So far, the network has been living up to this promise: Work has started on a major expansion to the emergency department of Lehigh Valley Hospital-Muhlenberg, and the network opened the Health Center at Tower Place and the Women's Health Center at 1490 Eighth Ave. in Bethlehem last month.

"The Woman's Health Center at Tower Place is spectacular; it'll be a model across the system. That planning was not done prior to us coming together," Cacchione said.

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"If you're in Center City, Jefferson, or you're in Schuylkill, or you're at Cedar Crest, or you're at Pocono, you can you can be assured that the quality of care is very consistent across the system."

— Dr. Joseph Cacchione, CEO of Jefferson Health

Parkland school mascots getting an upgrade

With help from AI, rebranding was designed to create a modern, cohesive look

By **Elizabeth DeOrnellas**
The Morning Call

Struggling to describe the limbs out, belly up posture of Cetronia Elementary's vintage hedgehog mascot, some evoke Flat Stanley — while others wonder what accident could cause such smushing. After an artificial-intelligence-inspired redesign, however, the new Hedgie gazes forward with anime eyes and a full smile.

Across the district's elementary and middle schools, mascots undertook a similar transformation, leaving Jaiindl Elementary with a noticeably less buff turkey,

removing the howl from the Kernsville Elementary coyote and straightening out the smile of the Schnecksville Elementary shark.

The mascot rebranding was designed to create a modern, cohesive look across the district's school logos. While the high school's Trojan logo remains unchanged, the rest of Parkland's schools will enter the new school year with updated designs that a district statement calls "fresh and contemporary."

When the redesign was announced, Cetronia Principal Jamie Giaquinto said he knew he'd need to put in some work to both acknowledge Hedgie's history and connect the school community to its new mascot.

"The long and short of it was getting buy-in from the school," Giaquinto said. "It's bigger than a graphic design project.

For an elementary school, there was a lot of emotion tied to the vintage Hedgie."

Staff, parents and students provided feedback on the district's initial design, and three new options were then produced. The school used its daily news show to facilitate a schoolwide vote, with the current version winning in a landslide.

Giaquinto said the Cetronia community accepted that the transition was going to happen, but the extra few months of input allowed the school to be heard.

"They understood the mission and vision of the district, but they felt that initial thing needed some work," Giaquinto said.

The first rendering of the new Hedgie looked "a little intense" and "more competitive," Giaquinto said, noting that it earned

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Swastikas spray-painted on Saucon Rail Trail sign

Lower Saucon Township police offering \$500 reward for information leading to an arrest

By **Anthony Salamone**
The Morning Call

Gerald Holum has lived more than 31/2 decades in a historic farmstead next to the Saucon Rail Trail, and he has never seen anything like what has happened in recent weeks.

Somebody spray-painted a historic marker with swastikas, the Nazi symbol of hate. Twice.

It happened along the Lower Saucon Township portion of the trail, which bumps up against his property, known as the "Wagner/Holum Farmstead" and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Public works employees installed a new sign Friday, which cost \$860, according to an invoice provided by the township.

Lower Saucon Township police said Friday a \$500 reward has been offered for information leading to an arrest.

The incidents remain under investigation, police Chief Thomas Barndt said. Authorities had no leads as of Friday.

Whoever vandalized the signs could face charges, including criminal mischief and ethnic intimidation. Such action on public property in Pennsylvania is a crime.

State Rep. Steve Samuelson, D-Northampton, who said he often walks along the rail trail, discovered the first vandalism in May.

Samuelson said he was walking about 6:15 a.m. when he saw the sign with the symbols. He continued his walk but, when he returned about 45 minutes later, he said township officials were quickly addressing the "horrible, ignorant travesty."

The longtime Bethlehem state representative said the acts of vandalism disgust him.

"Sometimes you see property defaced in the Lehigh Valley," he said, "but here somebody intentionally painting swastikas ... that's just beyond belief in 2025."

Police, in a crimewatchpa.com post, said they responded around 9:25 a.m. July 17 to the vandalism along the rail trail between Meadows Road and Walnut Street. The

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A new sign is on display Friday along the Saucon Rail Trail in Lower Saucon Township after the old sign was defaced with swastikas twice this year. The sign marks the historic Wagner-Holum Farmstead near Meadows Road. The Lower Saucon Township Council debated what to do about the vandalism at its Wednesday meeting. **APRIL GAMIZ/THE MORNING CALL**

ELECTION 2025

Tax collectors, auditors, other key local finance positions on November ballot

By **Amanda Fries**
Spotlight PA

On Nov. 4, Pennsylvanians will elect local officials who make critical decisions about public safety, financial priorities, and more.

Some voters will see candidates for tax collector, auditor, and other related positions on their ballot, depending on how their local government is structured.

Many municipalities hire an auditing firm rather than elect someone to review government finances and find any irregularities, said Paula Holoviak, a professor in the department of philosophy and government at Kutztown University. The position of tax collector, meanwhile, is "highly valued," she said, because it pays well and doesn't require

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advanced skills or training.

Almost all of the commonwealth's 2,560 municipalities elect tax collectors, while fewer than half elect auditors, according to a database maintained by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

Whether a community opts to elect those positions is determined by the type of municipality and its class. Townships, cities, and counties are further broken down into different classes based on factors like a community's population.

Those government structures also outline the roles of tax collector and auditor. In some cases, the duties of these positions are performed by other elected officials. For example, in third-class cities and some home rule municipalities, residents elect a treasurer who serves as the tax collector.

Before you head to the polls, it's important to understand your municipality's government structure, what positions are up for election, and why those roles are important.

What is a tax collector?

Tax collectors are responsible for gathering municipal, property, and personal taxes, as well as potentially other taxes and fees levied in a community. They are elected to

four-year terms.

To run for tax collector, you must be at least 21 and a resident of the municipality for at least a year before the election. You do not need to be a "public accountant or certified public accountant" to run, according to a manual from DCED, but basic training is required, along with continuing education while in office.

Tax collectors typically don't hire staff, but can hire deputies if needed. Success in a role is relative, Holoviak said. Being known in the community helps, she said. The elected position isn't about being qualified as much as aligning with local voters values like being trustworthy and community-minded, she

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