

The Philadelphia Inquirer

ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.



LIFE & CULTURE D1
RACHEL HARLOW'S STILL HERE
FIFTY YEARS AGO, SHE WAS THE QUEEN OF PHILLY NIGHTLIFE. TODAY, SHE'S READY TO TELL HER STORY

LIFE & CULTURE D1
WHERE TO SEE THE MOST MAGICAL LIGHT SHOWS AROUND PHILLY
PHILLY & REGION B1
THE SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER WHO WAS SHOT 11 TIMES — AND LIVED

SPORTS C7
PHILLIES WINTER MEETINGS PREVIEW




Kelly Wyatt leaves her wound care appointment at Jefferson Einstein Philadelphia Hospital's Center for Wound Healing in November.
Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer

The ‘tranq’ wounds that run deep

Drugs took both of her sons and her left leg. Now, Kelly Wyatt is committed to staying sober.

By Aubrey Whelan
Staff Writer

Kelly Wyatt winced as a nurse unwrapped layers of gauze from her left leg, exposing the massive wound beneath. Yellow and red and gray, weeping plasma and agonizingly painful at the slightest touch, it covered almost the entirety of the end of her

leg — the site of the amputation she had undergone four years before. Emergency room doctors at the time had warned her that if the drugs she was using didn't kill her, her wounds would. Now Wyatt is 14 months into recovery from an addiction to fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid, and xylazine, an animal tranquilizer never approved for human use. The emergence of xylazine, known as “tranq” on the streets, early in the decade marked the beginning of a dangerous new era for Philadelphians addicted to illicit opioids. Tranq users developed skin lesions that became gaping wounds, though exactly how is still unclear. As the medical establishment scrambled to respond,

amputations more than doubled among people addicted to opioids between 2019 and 2022. Wyatt, 52, is among hundreds of Philadelphians facing lifelong medical needs from tranq, as the latest wave of the area's drug crisis has seen a rapidly evolving succession of veterinary and industrial chemicals compound the dangers of the powerful opioids being sold on the streets. Some have become regular patients in burn units and wound care clinics at area hospitals, among the only places capable of treating severe tranq injuries. As part of its ongoing coverage of the area's drug crisis, The Inquirer followed Wyatt for more than a year as she went through early recovery

and worked with doctors to heal her wound. Wyatt initially shrugged when the small sores had emerged on her legs, only to watch them grow into massive abscesses, resulting in an amputation below her knee. Her ongoing tranq use prevented the wound on her left leg from healing properly. Even after recent months of sobriety and careful treatment, doctors are still warning her that they may have to amputate more of her leg. But Wyatt's tranq wounds go still deeper. Over the last several years, both of her sons had spiraled into addiction. By January, both of them were dead.

→ SEE WOUNDS ON A4

31,0000 dropped ACA plans in Pa. amid cost fears

Cancellations outpaced sign-ups 2-1 as open enrollment began for Pennie with tax credits endangered in D.C.

By Sarah Gantz
Staff Writer

For every person who signed up for Obamacare health insurance in Pennsylvania last month, two others dropped their plans in anticipation of skyrocketing costs. The average cost of a health plan through Pennsylvania's Affordable Care Act marketplace, Pennie, is expected to double, on average, with some people paying several times more in 2026, if Congress allows a key financial incentive program to expire at the end of this year. Pennie leaders say sticker shock for 2026 is undermining a program they credit for driving historically low uninsured rates. Nearly 31,000 people canceled their Pennie health plan in November, the first month of open enrollment, which runs through the end of January. About 16,000 people signed up.

Pennie administrators previously estimated that roughly 150,000 of the nearly 500,000 people who bought plans in 2025 will drop out because they find their options for 2026 unaffordable. Some level of turnover is normal, as people move out of state, find new jobs, or become eligible for other government programs, such as Medicare or Medicaid. But the sharp rise in plan cancellations — more than the marketplace saw in all of 2025 — shows that cost remains a driving factor in health decisions. “People want health coverage, and when it can fit in their budget, they buy it,” said Devon Trolley, Pennie's executive director. A partisan divide over the so-called enhanced premium tax credits was at the center of this fall's longest-ever federal government shutdown. The subsidies have helped offset the cost of Obamacare premiums, ensuring no one spends more than 8.5% of income on health insurance through Democrats' signature health coverage reforms implemented under President Barack Obama. The federal budget ultimately approved by the current Republican-controlled Congress did not include an extension of the tax credits, and it is unclear whether

→ SEE PENNIE ON A5

Inside the brotherly bond of Big 5 coaches

The respect was always there amid intense and heated competition, and even today the coaching culture is still intact.

By Alex Coffey
Staff Writer

In March of 2013, La Salle pulled off the improbable. The Explorers hadn't been to the NCAA Tournament since 1992. They hadn't advanced past the Round of 64 since 1990. But here they were, on a chilly night in Kansas City, edging out Kansas State, 63-61, to earn a spot in the Round of 32. As players danced in the middle of the locker room, with the music blaring, an unlikely figure emerged. Donning a black suit with a blue dress shirt, the visitor walked through the chaos, straight to La Salle's head coach, John Giannini. It was Jay Wright. His team had a game in a few hours, against North Carolina, but the Villanova head coach wanted to



Former Big 5 coaches Bill Herrion, Phil Martelli, John Chaney, Speedy Morris, Fran Dunphy, and Steve Lappas. Courtesy of American Cancer Society's Coaches Vs. Cancer Philadelphia Chapter

congratulate his dear friend. “Once we got to the tournament, we were always rooting for each other,” Wright said of the Big 5 programs. “It was always about Philadelphia basketball.” This was the way he and his Big

5 counterparts had been taught. When Wright was an assistant at Villanova in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he watched as head coach Rollie Massimino battled with Temple's John Chaney. The games were intense, and

often heated, but they always showed each other respect. Sometimes, Big 5 coaches would go to dinner afterwards. It wasn't uncommon for them to get together during the offseason.

→ SEE COACHES ON A11

WEATHER B8
PARTLY CLOUDY
HIGH 42 / LOW 30

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