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## BREAKING THE ICE



Contestants in the 2026 Greater Pottsville Winter Carnival's three categories — Queen of Snows, Snowflake Princess and Snowdrop Princess — pose together at the Royal Tea Party at Mountain Valley Golf Course on Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026. **HYUN SOO LEE/STAFF PHOTOS**

### Winter Carnival contestants mingle at Royal Tea Party

By Hyun Soo Lee  
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BARNESVILLE — The Greater Pottsville Winter Carnival on Sunday held its annual Royal Tea Party, a light-hearted social event that gave contestants a chance to mingle with one another and meet the reigning royalty.

Held inside the Mountain Valley Golf Course banquet hall, the Royal Tea was this year's first public Winter Carnival event. It brought together all 70 of the young girls and women vying for the Snowdrop Princess, Snowflake Princess and Queen of Snows titles.

Accompanied by family members, the contestants enjoyed a relaxing afternoon with their peers, sipping tea, enjoying decadent desserts, taking pictures and participating in a basket raffle. The party drew around 180 total attendees.

This year, there are 23 candidates for Snowdrop Princess, who are in second and third grade; 26 for Snowflake Princess, high school juniors; and 21 for Queen of Snows, 18- to 29-year-old women.

T.J. Fitzpatrick, president, said all contestants are judged on poise, personality, voice projection and appearance. Courtney McCabe, tea party coordinator, said the event allows contestants to break the ice and interact with the reigning Queen of Snows, Snowflake and Snowdrop Princess. This was the 16th edition of the tea party, now recognized as an important, non-judged event typically held near the beginning of the carnival festivities.



Contestants for the Winter Carnival's Snowdrop Princess title — girls in second and third grade — pose with outgoing Snowdrop Princess Piper Markus on Sunday at Mountain Valley Golf Course.

*It's a neat event for mothers and daughters and the contestants — some fathers as well — to come out and have a bit of a formal tea party,*

— COURTNEY MCCABE, Royal Tea Party coordinator

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“It's a neat event for mothers and daughters and the contestants — some fathers as well — to come out and have a bit of a formal tea party,” McCabe said.

Each Winter Carnival features a different theme; this year, the theme is “I Love the Winter Carnival,” a spin on the famous “I Love New York” marketing slogan.

The children's book “Eloise at the Plaza” was also an inspiration for the

See **TEA** on Page A8

## Reclaiming the MLK holiday

### Political climate in U.S. spurs efforts

By Terry Tang  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

As communities across the country on Monday hosted parades, panels and service projects for the 40th federal observation of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the political climate for some is more fraught with tensions than festive with reflection on the slain Black American civil rights icon's legacy.

In the year since Donald Trump's second inauguration fell on King Day, the Republican president has adopted a scorched earth stance against diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and targeted mostly Black-led cities for federal law enforcement operations, among other policies that many King admirers have criticized.

One year ago, Trump's executive orders, “Ending Illegal Discrimination And Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity” and “Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing,” accelerated a rollback of civil rights and racial justice initiatives in federal agencies, corporations and universities. Last month, the National Park Service announced it will no longer offer free admission to parks on King Day and Juneteenth, but instead on Flag Day and Trump's birthday.

A.R. Bernard, founder, pastor and CEO of the Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, told an audience gathered at King's home church in Atlanta Sunday that the Trump administration is attempting to rewrite history.

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### BROADBAND IN PA.

## Expansion on hold as feds miss self- imposed deadline to review state's spending plan

By Charlotte Keith  
SPOTLIGHT PA

HARRISBURG — Hundreds of millions of dollars to expand broadband access in Pennsylvania is still on hold, after federal officials failed to meet their self-imposed early December deadline to review the commonwealth's plan for spending the money.

Without federal approval, Pennsylvania cannot finalize agreements with the companies that expect to receive the money, and they cannot begin construction.

The cause of the delay is unclear. A spokesperson for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the federal

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## Lavelle Fire Co. unveils ‘new to us’ fire truck

### Vehicle bought from Old Forge Fire Department

By Ron Devlin  
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LAVELLE — Things looked pretty dim around the Lavelle Fire Company when its 30-year-old Pierce fire truck broke down with engine failure in November.

In a matter of six weeks or

so, with assistance from neighboring fire companies, Lavelle found a replacement — a 2002 E-One Typhoon/Saulsbury pumper at the Old Forge Fire Department.

“We are proud to introduce this ‘new-to-us’ Engine 4-12, the fire company said in a Facebook post earlier this month. “We're excited that this engine will serve the community for many years.”

Fire Chief Russel Hummel said the new truck has a pumping capacity of 1,500 gallons per minute and a 1,000 gallon

booster tank.

“We were so lucky to find something that fits our needs,” said Hummel, fire chief since 2019. “The truck has been exceptionally well maintained.”

Locustdale Fire Company lent Lavelle a truck until they could find a new one.

Aristes Fire Chief Greg Younger assisted Lavelle in locating the 24-year-old E-One pumper on Signal 5 Fire Apparatus, a fire truck broker.

A Signal 5 listing said the E-One has a Saulsbury stain-

less steel rescue body with roll up doors. It has a 6-person cab, LED lighting and a headset communications system. There's room to store 14-foot and 24-foot ladders.

With just under 30,000 miles on it, the truck had been in service for 2,288 hours.

Listed in “very good” condition, the E-One had undergone complete servicing in 2025. It was listed at an asking price of \$80,000 — a fraction of the cost of a new truck.

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Lavelle Fire Company purchased a “new to us” 2002 E-ONE fire truck from Old Forge Fire Department in Lackawanna County. **COURTESY OF LAVELLE FIRE**

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