

**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Regional student-athletes from Berlin Brothersvalley and Forest Hills get recognition in weekly feature. B2.



**SWEEP COMPLETE**

Oneil Cruz delivers go-ahead hit in 8th inning as Pirates top visiting Reds 1-0. B1.



# The Tribune-Democrat

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MONDAY

\$2.50 NEWSSTAND

## 'Bring your best,' UPJ grads told

Former Education secretary speaks at ceremony

BY DAVID HURST  
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Urging the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown's Class of 2026 to "treat every day like a job interview," Miguel Cardona leaned on his journey to a presidential Cabinet post – and a line from Broadway's "Hamilton."

Cardona became U.S. Department of Education secretary beginning in 2021 – just two years after his "shot" took the New England public school assistant superintendent to a top post in Connecticut.

Cardona said he recalled then-Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont praising the musical "Hamilton" in a speech months prior to his job interview for state education commissioner.

"I told him I'm young, scrappy and hungry (to make a difference)," Cardona told the crowd, adding that bond he forged that day with Lamont may have helped get him the job that served as a stepping stone to the highest

ranking U.S. post in education. "Listen to what people are saying, what other people care about," he told the group of 411 graduates in caps and gowns. "If you treat every day as a job interview and pursue what you are passionate about, doors will open for you."

Cardona, Pitt-Johnstown's keynote speaker for its 2026 spring commencement, served as the nation's 12th Department of

Education secretary from 2021 through January 2025.

He served the Biden administration and guided the nation's school system through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just 20 years prior, Cardona was a young elementary school teacher just trying to make a difference in the lives of a classroom

Please see **UPJ, A2**



DAVID HURST/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT  
Former U.S. Department of Education Secretary Miguel A. Cardona shakes hands with Pitt-Johnstown graduate Leo Geis and fellow members of Pitt-Johnstown's Class of 2026 prior to their commencement Saturday.

## 'It can become a 24/7 issue'

Bullying takes on many forms, affects entire families

BY DAVE SUTOR  
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Bullying used to be mostly confined to schools, playgrounds and other places where children spent time together. That has changed.

Victims can be harassed with texts, manipulated AI images shared with peers, social media posts and chat-room comments. Every notification sound from a cellphone is a potential threat from a bully. It can all seem inescapable for the targeted person.

Those omnipresent phones have also changed how people, including youngsters, gather information.

Gone are the times when the day's news was learned about primarily through printed local newspapers, nightly TV broadcasts, radios and personal conversations. In its place, the pains of the world – war, poverty, social unrest, people dying in natural disasters – can be seen from a handheld screen at any minute of the day.

Many of those children are also dealing with other factors that can affect their well-being, including living in split homes, food insecurity and abuse, care professionals said.

"There are just so many things out there right now that children and adolescents have to deal with that basically can create anxiety, depression, etc. – if they're not dealt with in the proper manner or dealt with

Please see **BULLYING, A2**



PHOTOS BY THOMAS SLUSSER/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT  
Greater Johnstown YMCA CEO Ann Gutsy stands outside the facility on Haynes Street in downtown Johnstown on Thursday.



Renika Padmore, Peniel graduate and assistant counselor, is seen Wednesday at the Christian-based rehabilitation facility on Cooper Avenue in Johnstown.

## Substance abuse often linked to mental illness

BY DAVE SUTOR  
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Renika Padmore's parents divorced when she was 3 years old. She blamed herself.

A sexual assault occurred at age 9. She kept it secret for years.

Socially indulging in alcohol and drugs provided an escape. She became dependent. There were multiple suicide

attempts. She lived through them all.

A violent altercation took place with her boyfriend, an attempted murder was committed "out of fear and rage and just craziness" in her words. She served prison time.

There were diagnoses of depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety.

Please see **SUBSTANCE, A2**

## Creative designs draw praise from LEGO convention-goers

BY DAVID HURST  
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Leaning forward at his mother's hip, Nasir Sanders' eyes widened as a plume of programmed smoke ascended from a dark "Star Wars" temple.

"Look at that," the 3-year-old Pittsburgh boy exclaimed, pointing at the lively LEGO block creation.

Nearby, Neil Bonness nodded. "That's what we do this for," said Bonness, of

Akron, Ohio, who spent weeks building the Sith temple scene. "The best thing about LEGO is it's all-inclusive. If what I do inspires kids to start building, it's worth it."

Bonness was among a group of builders, exhibitors and LEGO-lovers who filled the 1st Summit Arena @ Cambria County War Memorial Sunday for the second day of Brick Convention.

Launched by a collective of LEGO building

Please see **LEGO, A2**



DAVID HURST/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT  
LEGO fans look over Master Builder Tim Hutchins' expansive Legends of the Old Brick West display Sunday at 1st Summit Arena in Johnstown.

## Airport girds for surge in travelers

Spirit Airlines shuts down over weekend

BY DAVID HURST  
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John Murtha Johnstown-Cambria County Airport officials said they are prepared for a surge of southbound passengers in the wake of Spirit Airlines' shutdown.

Spirit ceased operations at midnight Saturday nationwide.

It was the sole carrier serving Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in Westmoreland County – and one of several offering Florida flights from Pittsburgh.

"We realize there's a good portion of the market area surrounding Latrobe who are now closer to Johnstown airport than they are to Pittsburgh," airport Manager Cory Cree said.

That increases the air traveler "encatchment area" served by the John Murtha-Johnstown Cambria County Airport, which offers daily flights to and from

Please see **AIRPORT, A2**

## Latrobe most impacted by airline's end

BY DAVID HURST  
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Low-cost carrier Spirit Airlines' flights added up to a high percentage of all commercial flight seats for some airports in the U.S. and beyond, from May 2025 to April 30, flight figures show.

Here are the top 12 impacted by the airline's announced shutdown.

- Latrobe: 100% of all seats.
- Atlantic City: 94%
- Fort Lauderdale: 28%
- Myrtle Beach: 23%
- Tegucigalpa (Honduras): 20%
- San Pedro Sula (Honduras): 17%
- St. Thomas: 15%
- St. Croix: 13%
- Orlando: 11%
- Detroit: 10%
- New Orleans: 10%
- Armenia (Colombia): 9%

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GOOD MORNING, JOHN YAKULIK!  
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Richland junior down to five colleges to play football. B1.

**LOCAL**  
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**NATIONAL**  
Trump: Pentagon preparing to release "interesting" UFO files. A6.



**WEATHER**  
Partly sunny and breezy. High 69, low 56. **Five-day forecast/B6**