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CYCLOSPORIASIS OUTBREAK

FRESH PRODUCE PROVIDES PEACE

Amid concerns about lettuce safety, customers say Scranton Farmers Market offers safe haven for purchases



Heather Ryder, employee of Jim’s Farm Produce, works at the stand near the lettuce for sale at the Scranton Co-Op Farmers Market on Friday. SEAN MCKEAG/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

By Geri Gibbons
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Opening day of Scranton’s Co-Op Farmers Market on Friday found Darlene and Frank Gullone purchasing all of their usual favorites, including tomatoes, onions, beans and lettuce.

Like many other area residents who arrived early at the market, they had no concerns about lettuce associated with a widespread outbreak of the diarrhea-causing parasite cyclospora.

The couple, of Dickson City, come to

the market multiple times each year. They know what they like to eat and they know the vendors. They even know some of the other customers.

To them, there is no safer place to purchase produce, including lettuce.

Neil and Mary Frances Malatesta also came out early to get the best selection.

Neil Malatesta, who grew up on a farm, stressed the importance of supporting local farmers, especially in the face of economic challenges.

The two bought cucumbers, zucchini and other vegetables destined for their

dinner table.

‘HAND CLEANED, HAND PICKED AND HAND PACKED’

Bill Hopkins of Hopkins Farm LLC emphasized there were “zero problems” with produce grown locally. He said vegetables sold from his farm are “hand cleaned, hand picked and hand packed.”

Smaller, local farms are always the safest choice, because they are accountable to their customers, he said.

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Shoppers turn to locally grown produce across Northeast Pa.

By Ron Devlin
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PORT CARBON — At a farm-fresh produce stand, shoppers worried about what they’re putting on their dining room table in the wake of a foodborne illness sweeping across the United States, including Pennsylvania.

Just the thought of her 1-year-old possibly coming down with what’s been

FINDING THE SOURCE: Lettuce from Taco Bell in five states confirmed as source of parasite. **Page B8**

described as “explosive” diarrhea has Torie Naradko in a panic.

“It’s terrifying,” she confided Tuesday evening while shopping for locally grown produce.

Symptoms of cyclosporiasis — caused by cyclospora cayetanensis, a parasite only visible under a micro-

scope — include watery diarrhea, nausea, cramping and fatigue that can last for weeks.

Those concerns have led Pennsylvania shoppers to seek produce that reduces the risk of infection.

‘YOU KNOW WHAT YOU’RE GETTING’

Renee Pretti was one of the Port Carbon stand’s first customers, and one of

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Shoppers browse fresh produce at the Dieter Farms stand in Port Carbon on Tuesday.

AISHWARYA BEHL/STAFF PHOTO

ARCHBALD

Developer with Russian ties eyes borough for data centers

PNK Group launches advertising campaign

By Frank Wilkes Lesnefsky
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A New York City developer with ties to Russia launched an advertising campaign in Archbald about what could become the borough’s seventh proposed data center project.

PNK Group mailed flyers this week with QR codes and launched Facebook ads directing residents to an online survey about its project in the Valley View Business Park. Survey questions range from how long respondents have lived or worked in Archbald to how they feel about a data center located in an industrial area. A map above the survey depicts a parcel highlighted in red and labeled “PNK Site” in the business park on the southeast side of Archbald Heights Road, across the street from the Chewy warehouse.

“Could a well-designed data center, located deep within an industrial area and designed to minimize impacts on its neighbors, be a good neighbor? Tell us what you think,” the survey asks.

PNK purchased the 44.5-acre property nearly 2½ years ago from SLIBCO, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce’s industrial development arm, for just over \$3.3 million. It acquired the land under PNK P1 LLC.

On March 29, PNK Group was one of six companies to receive a letter from U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., and U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., as part of an investigation into the sales of large-scale warehouses for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers. In total, 52 lawmakers signed onto the document.

The letter, addressed to PNK Group founder and owner Andrey Sharkov, references PNK’s sale of a warehouse in Social Circle, Georgia, to ICE for \$129 million. It also describes Russian ties.

“Already, DHS has spent close to \$1 billion acquiring warehouses from owners such as PNK S1 LLC Group (a subsidiary of a Russian-founded industrial developer),” the lawmakers wrote.

ICE has since abandoned those plans, according to the Georgia town.

PNK Group officials had not responded to a list of questions as of Friday afternoon.

PNK has developed two warehouses in Lackawanna County with plans for a third.

The company’s website adver-

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