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HELPING OUR VETERANS

‘A SAFE SPACE TO CALL HOME’

Scranton veteran Tighe to acquire Wilkes-Barre home through nonprofit’s new affordable housing program



Wounded war veteran Jody Tighe, left, of Scranton, and Maryann Velez, founder, president, and CEO of United NEPA Alliance, at the site where the alliance plans to build a home for Tighe in Wilkes-Barre. PHOTOS BY JASON ARDAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

By Stephen Mocarsky
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Scranton native Jody Tighe has faced a lot of struggles in life, from a childhood spent in foster care to discrimination to injuries suffered during his military service.

It was his determination and success in overcoming those challenges and a desire to give back to the community that earned him the opportunity to acquire a new home in Wilkes-Barre through an affordable housing program.

The Veterans Oversight Committee of United NEPA Alliance chose Tighe, 46, to participate in the nonprofit’s pilot Welcome Home Program.

The program is designed to provide attainable, affordable and accessible housing to vulnerable populations, such as military veterans and families facing severe medical or financial challenges.

The City of Wilkes-Barre donated a vacant lot at 43 Monroe St. to the program in 2023 after demolishing a dilapidated structure there, and UNA has been raising funds for the construction of a new home ever since.

UNA officials had initially chosen a



Wounded war veteran Jody Tighe, of Scranton, at the site of his future home in Wilkes-Barre on Aug. 28.

family with a quadriplegic child for the pilot program. But, after the family’s circumstances changed, the nonprofit’s leaders decided to shift focus.

“I immediately went back to my board and I said, let’s take a look at

where the veterans are,” UNA founder, president and CEO Maryann Velez said in an interview last week.

“I truly believe in my heart of hearts

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LACKAWANNA COUNTY

FUNDING FOR STUDY ON SALARY SECURED

County officials hope review helps bolster employee retention and recruitment

By Jeff Horvath
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Lackawanna County secured \$131,250 in state funding for a comprehensive salary study officials will pursue with a downstream goal of improving employee retention and recruitment.

It’s the latest grant the county has received stemming from its ongoing participation in the state’s Strategic Management Planning Program that previously delivered funds officials used to engage and later retain PFM Group Consulting LLC, the financial consultants behind the county’s long-term financial management plan.

Elsewhere in the county and region, the cities of Carbondale and Pottsville and the borough of Tunkhannock also secured STMP grants during the most recent round of program funding.

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SCRANTON

50th La Festa Italiana wraps up downtown

By Christine Lee
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SCRANTON — City resident Donna Gerard and her daughter Ashley Abda of Throop don’t just come to La Festa Italiana every year for the food and people. For them, it’s a way to support a long-running community institution.

“I guess it just brings the community together,” Abda said.

Gerard and Abda, along with Abda’s 6-year old daughter Audriana Abda, were among hundreds of people who made their way to Courthouse Square over the course of the four-day festival, which concluded on Monday. Sunny weather and lots of different foods brought throngs of people from near and far to the downtown Italian festival that celebrated its 50th anniversary this year.

Those who came out the final day were mainly drawn to the variety of Italian and festival food offered by various vendors.

Many people, like Dickson City residents

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Some states raise pay for home caregivers as shortage looming

By Anne Saker
STATELINE.ORG

WILMINGTON, Ohio — From her recliner in her tidy townhouse, Donna Logan offers advice to the first baby boomers to hit the big ‘8-0’ this year: Life can be good, especially with someone like Helen Aponte helping with laundry and house-keeping and the drive to the doctor’s office.

“I do most things on my own,” said Logan, 81, a native of Wilmington, Ohio. “But having Helen come in once a week gives me confidence.”

“I drive her, whatever she needs,” said Aponte, 52. “It makes me happy to help

Donna stay in her home.”

Logan and Aponte found each other about a year ago through the Council on Aging in Southwest Ohio in rural Clinton County, about 40 miles northeast of Cincinnati. For three hours on Mondays, Aponte works directly for Logan as a home care aide for \$15 an hour, paid by a county property tax for senior services.

Aponte helps Logan with the tasks of daily living, not with medical care. For a senior, that support can mean the difference between aging at home or in an institution charging thousands of dollars a day.

Many seniors who are relatively healthy but need some assistance could see that

relationship as an ideal arrangement. But it won’t be possible for many baby boomers, the 65 million Americans who were born between 1946 and 1964.

This year, four million Americans in that generation, including Cher, Sylvester Stallone and President Donald Trump, turned 80. Every day for at least the next decade, another 10,000 will join them. By 2030, Americans over 65 will outnumber those under 18.

For decades, experts have warned that the country was not prepared for this demographic wave.

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Helen Aponte, left, is a home care aide for Donna Logan of Wilmington, Ohio. ANNE SAKER/STATELINE

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