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Wednesday, September 26, 2012
211th
50¢ Newsstand

River Walk Art worth wait!

Fish sculpture gets rave reviews

By DAVID THOMPSON
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It took a bit longer than expected to complete, but those on hand Tuesday for the unveiling of a sculpture on the Susquehanna River Walk said it was worth the wait.

Oval-based artist Michael Patterson created the 35-foot-wide, stainless steel sculpture, which depicts nine fish native to the Susquehanna River. The piece is titled "What Lives in There."

The sculpture was installed just downstream from the Maynard Street Bridge on the concrete floodwall on the South Williamsport side of the river.

The piece was commissioned by local art advocacy group PublicARTWORKS, a subcommittee of the Lycoming County Celebrates the Arts Alliance. It was expected to be completed in about a year, but took several months longer to install.

When Patterson pulled down the plastic tarp covering the sculpture, a collective "wow" emanated from the large crowd assembled before it. They broke into spontaneous applause.

Patterson pointed to each fish in the sculpture: musky, shad, carp, smallmouth bass, walleye, catfish, sucker, sunfish and eel.

"This is what lives in there — right on the other side of this fence," Patterson said, pointing to the river.

"It was definitely worth the wait," said Yvonne DiRocco, alliance president. "I'm very excited."

"We are extremely pleased with it," said Karen Pinnsoneault, co-chairwoman of the committee. "Michael was magnificent to work with. I think the community will absolutely love it."

"I love it. I think it's going to add some pizzazz to the River Walk and community," said borough Mayor David Lechniak. "It just adds on to the river walk, which gets better and better every year."

"It's a nice addition to the borough and shows our community values the river and wants to beautify it with art," said Michael Miller, borough administrator.

PublicARTWORKS plans to commission a piece of public art each year for the next 10 years and have them installed along the river walk. Patterson was the first to have his art installed by the committee. His piece joins Muncy artist Pam Madai Barner's lumber-

(See FISH, Page A-6)

MARK NANCE/Sun-Gazette

Artist Michael Patterson, of Jersey Shore, created the stainless steel sculpture called "What Lives in There." The sculpture is mounted on the flood wall on the Susquehanna River Walk in South Williamsport.

State makes new changes to try to save photo ID law

By MARC LEVY
Associated Press

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania state officials on Tuesday once again produced an 11th-hour attempt to salvage a tough, new law requiring all voters to show a particular kind of photo ID in the hours before a court hearing on whether it will effectively strip some people of the right to vote this year.

Top Corbett administration officials testified in Commonwealth Court that a newly streamlined process for get a voting-only photo ID card from the state was finalized Monday night in an effort to satisfy a week-old Supreme Court decision that insisted the state comply with the liberal access to a photo ID that the law seemed to promise.

DECISION'12

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Ohio may be key to White House
▶ See A-3

The new process was supposed to become effective Tuesday morning.

"We're trying to balance what the act requires and direction the court had led us in," testified Shannon Royer, a deputy secretary for the Department of State, which oversees elections.

As a result, a registered voter will no longer be required to first try to get a "secure" photo ID from the state that can be used for non-voting purposes, such as cashing a check or boarding an airplane. Also, the person seeking the voting-only photo ID will no longer need to show two documents that prove where they live.

However, the person seeking the voting-only ID will still need to swear — under penalty of law — that they have no other form of ID that is valid under the law and give their name, date of birth, Social Security number and address.

The Commonwealth Court hearing is the latest chapter in a legal challenge asking to halt the law from taking effect in the Nov. 6 election.

In a 4-2 decision last week, the state Supreme Court ordered Tuesday's Commonwealth Court hearing to determine whether the state is meeting the law's requirement of providing easy access to a valid photo ID. If it is not, or if the judge believes any registered voters will be prevented from casting a ballot,

Laurel Health joins with Susquehanna Health

By CHERYL R. CLARKE
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WELLSBORO — The integration of Laurel Health System and its affiliates into Susquehanna Health received regulatory approval Sept. 1.

The consolidation is more of a "partnership" and an "affiliation" than a consolidation, said Steven P. Johnson, president and CEO of Susquehanna Health. Patients of both systems can expect better and more services as a result.

Laurel Health — which includes Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hospital, the Green Home and other services — joined with Williamsport Regional Medical Center, Divine Providence Hospital, Muncy Valley Hospital and the Susquehanna Health Medical Group, all of which are under the "umbrella" of Susquehanna Health.

JOHNSON

No staff layoffs are expected, Chief Business Development Officer Ron Butler said during a media open house at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hospital on Tuesday. Butler also is president and CEO of Laurel Health Systems.

"We are both in good shape financially on our own, not stressed, so we are not doing this because we had to but rather because it was in the best interest of the community," Butler said.

Johnson agreed, saying any layoffs will occur over time through attrition, as employees retire or leave.

But, with the upcoming "sequester" in the federal budget under the Affordable Care Act, which is set to take effect Jan. 1, 2013, hospitals across the nation will see severe reductions in payments, Johnson said.

(See LAUREL, Page A-6)

Mother, son flee Mifflin Township trailer fire

By PAUL GARRETT
Sun-Gazette Correspondent

From Page A-1

The fish are as follows: 1. musky 2. shad 3. carp 4. smallmouth bass 5. walleye 6. catfish 7. sucker 8. sunfish 9. eel

MARK NANCE/Sun-Gazette, Sun-Gazette Graphic

Fish sculpture was worth wait

(From Page A-1)

era "woodhick," which is on the north side of the river west of the Market Street Bridge.

For Patterson, the last 18 months have been a labor of love.

Patterson said he chose the theme of the piece because he loves fish and fishing. Creating a piece showing species of fish native to the river was a perfect way of connecting the river walk to the river, he said.

At times, working on the project was stressful. Patterson worried how he would build the sculpture, then how he would install it.

On rare occasions, he questioned whether he even should have become involved in it at all.

But on Tuesday, those feelings disappeared in a flood of good will.

"You were the right choice, there is no doubt about it," committee member Mark Murawski told Patterson. "You have exceeded our expectations."

"I'm a little euphoric. I'm still in disbelief, but now there's closure to the whole thing," Patterson said, adding, "I'm really jazzed people are so into it."

Patterson said when he moved to the area in 1969, the river was little more than a garbage dump that nearly was devoid of aquatic life.

"The river was a mess," he said.

Now the river is much cleaner and the fish depicted in his sculpture — except the shad — are in abundance.

People should remember, however, that demands are being placed on the river by growing communities and that it should be treated with care and honor, Patterson said.

The sculpture was paid for with a $12,000 grant from the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania, and a legacy donation from Jane and Charlie Darrow, of Jersey Shore, in honor of Ann Combs Darrow, of Doylestown. All three were in attendance for the unveiling. Others donated, as well. Former county Commissioner Rebecca Burke donated proceeds from a retirement roast to public art.

Jennifer Wilson, executive director of the foundation, said the sculpture unveiling not only celebrates the art of Michael Patterson, but the art of giving demonstrated by the community.

County Pre-Release Center crews prepared the floodwall for the project by washing, painting and applying a graffiti-resistant coating to it.

According to committee co-chairwoman Laura Flynn, using crews from the center allowed the wall to be painted at a fraction of what it otherwise would cost.

The installation of the sculpture is a step toward making the area one of the greatest art communities in the nation, Murawski said.

"I'm thrilled," Flynn said. "It's so exciting to see how people in Williamsport are looking at art in a different way. It's almost becoming the arts center of central Pennsylvania."

"This has significance far beyond this event," said Jerry S. Walls, chairman of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership. "It brings together so many elements if this community and the river itself."

Attendees applaud above during the unveiling of Michael Patterson's sculpture on the Susquehanna Riverwalk Tuesday, above. Many went home with photographs of the work like the woman at left.

MARK NANCE/Sun-Gazette

Laurel Health, Susquehanna Health begin partnership

CHERYL R. CLARKE/Sun-Gazette

Laurel Health System and Susquehanna Health celebrated their official integration on Tuesday at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hospital in Wellsboro. From left are Janie Hilfiger, chief nursing executive, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hospital; Ron Butler, chief business development officer, Susquehanna Health; Steven P. Johnson, president and CEO, Susquehanna Health; Jan Fisher, chief operating officer, Susquehanna Health; and Dr. Walter Laibinis, chief of internal medicine/chief medical officer, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hospital.

(From Page A-1)

"Just our two counties will see a $330 million reduction over a two-year period," he added. "That is hard to imagine."

Every county and every state is running calculations to determine the impact if the sequester goes into effect as planned, Johnson said.

"But we are stronger together by joining forces," he added. "This is a strategy, a long-term partnership for the challenges that lie ahead."

For the immediate future, the only thing patients will notice, he said, is an eventual change in the signage and the presence of more doctors and nurses, as specialists in cancer and cardiology are made available to Soldiers and Sailors, occasionally at first and then more often.

Eleven work groups comprised of representatives of both organizations have been formed to begin immediately planning for physician recruitment needs, adding cancer care in Tioga County and other key partnership priorities.

"We won't have to send people miles away from their homes to get the type of medical care they need," Johnson said.

The costs for these services will remain the same, Butler said.

"Rates will not change this fiscal year," which runs from July to June, he added.

Services will improve by "bringing more cardiologists up occasionally, more ear, nose and throat doctors, and more primary care providers into the area," said Dr. Walter Laibinis, chief of internal medicine and chief medical officer at Soldiers and Sailors.

Soldiers and Sailors Chief Nursing Executive Janie Hilfiger said she thinks the move will be "great for nurses" from both organizations because Laurel Health nurses also will get an opportunity to sample working in specialties "we may not have here."

"It will be a great opportunity for our nursing staff to see how they do it down there (Williamsport) and for their staff to see how we do things here," Hilfiger said. "And, we can come up with the best of both worlds."

Patients also soon will have access to their medical records online through "My Key Care," which is used throughout the state so patients can become more active paticipants in their care, Johnson said.

Mother and son flee their burning Mifflin Township home

(From Page A-1)

woke up to the smell of smoke.

She went to the bedroom and saw fire and smoke. She grabbed her son and went to a neighbor's home for help.

"She was screaming 'my house is on fire,' " said neighbor Ashley Bryant

believes it started with a space heater she was using to heat the rear bedroom due to the temperature dropping into the 40s overnight.

"I haven't turned on the main heat or even got oil yet because the furnace needs work," said Joshua Cagle,