

MEMORIAL B8
MILTON STREET HONORED FOR HIS PASSION

MUSIC B8
A FRESH APPROACH TO ‘MESSIAH’

The Philadelphia Inquirer

CITY, SUBURBS & SOUTH JERSEY

PHILLY & REGION

Reaching out to ease N. Philly’s drug crisis

Overdoses are spiking there. Help is finding communities left out of the city’s opioid response.

By Aubrey Whelan
Staff Writer

Every Wednesday afternoon, Dominique McQuade sets out to canvass the North Philadelphia neighborhood around Temple University Hospital with a backpack full of naloxone and fentanyl testing strips — and a stack of fliers printed with alarming statistics.

Here in zip code 19140, fatal overdoses have risen by 66% in just

three years.

In 2021, 84 people died of an overdose here, second only to the 169 overdose deaths in the 19134 zip code encompassing the Kensington community, long at the center of the city’s opioid crisis.

Both communities showcase the need for more resources for drug users all around the city, especially after years of record-high overdoses. But Kensington has gotten more attention. That neighborhood is the only place in Philadelphia where people in addiction can find a brick-and-mortar clinic that exchanges used needles for new ones, and other services to reduce the harmful effects of drug use.

In North Philly, help for people in addiction is scarcer. So is

knowledge about the tainted drug supply that is killing residents here.

Going street by street on foot, at least once a week, McQuade leads a team of health department outreach workers — all of whom live in the neighborhood — dispelling misinformation about drug use in North Philly.

‘Overdosing behind closed doors’

On a recent Wednesday, in bitter cold, McQuade and coworkers Jarrel Boyd and Quadre Rivers walked up and down Broad Street, offering testing strips and naloxone to passersby and shop owners. Some turned them down. One man took a handful of strips,

→ SEE OVERDOSES ON B4



Outreach workers (from left) Quadre Rivers, Jarrel Boyd, and Dominique McQuade of the city Department of Public Health near the corner of Broad and Erie in North Philadelphia. The group distributes drug testing strips, naloxone, and literature to people in the community. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer



(From left) Katela Villaseñor, 19, Sister Debbie Krist, Sister Pat Smith, Sister Esther Anderson, Sister Bernadette Brazil, and Kayla Patino, 19, practice before filming a TikTok video. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer

Nuns, Neumann students make shared space work

A local convent had space. The university needed housing. Now, generations are mixing in a dorm.

By Susan Snyder
Staff Writer

Neumann University sophomore Katela Villaseñor proudly displayed

the recently snapped photos on her dorm room wall of herself and a dorm mate donning white bunny ears and striking funny poses.

“She was showing me some of her dance moves,” said Villaseñor, 19, a nursing major from Reading.

Her 77-year-old dorm mate, however, wasn’t quite so eager to show off the photos.

“I have to appear in public after this,” Sister Esther Anderson said.

Actually, Anderson said she didn’t really mind. That’s life at

the Our Lady of Angels Convent in Aston, Delaware County, since 40 college students moved in earlier this year, joining the 40 Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia who already lived there. The Catholic university purchased the adjacent 63-acre property and convent of its founding order last year to add much-needed student living space, but the school wasn’t about to boot the sisters who still lived there. And they didn’t want to leave.

“Being with the young is like

a shot of cocaine,” Sister Jane LaManna, 79, said recently when sisters and students gathered to talk about their unusual living arrangement.

Fellow sisters urged LaManna to use a different word, noting that she really has no knowledge of what cocaine is like. “Shot of adrenaline,” one suggested.

“Stronger than that,” LaManna insisted.

Sister Pat Smith said she was

→ SEE NEUMANN ON B2

HOLIDAY OFFER OF CHEER IN W. PHILLY

Volunteers offered joy as those who remain at University City Townhomes battle rodent problems.

By Ximena Conde
Staff Writer

With gospel music and the smell of smoke from multiple portable fire pits piercing the cold air, a dozen volunteers got to spreading holiday cheer for about 15 families in the University City Townhomes on Sunday afternoon.

About 20 volunteers — including students from the nearby University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University, labor union members, and other supporters — navigated the holiday operation using a two-prong approach.

Some wrapped garlands and string lights around the apartments of those who remain in the complex that once housed about 70 families. Others took to making chalk outlines of Christmas trees. Meanwhile, people such as Sheldon Davids, a former resident of the Townhomes who left in September, came ready to tackle minor apartment repairs with his toolbox.

“We’ve decided that we’re going to step into the group in any way we can to send a message that notwithstanding the amount of residents that are left, the heart of the community is still here,” he said, adding remaining residents needed something to look forward to after a difficult year.

Last year, owners of Townhomes IBID Associates announced it wouldn’t renew its affordable housing contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development after about 40 years. Since then, residents have fought to preserve the homes on 40th and Market Streets, only to see most of their neighbors move out and the

→ SEE HOMES ON B4

It’s official: Sounds of quiet will continue at former dragway

Nature will continue to take her course as the 278 acres are permanently preserved.

By Frank Kummer
Staff Writer

Pocono Drag Lodge opened in the 1960s and went on to host some of the top drivers in the country, filling the woods around Bear Creek Township in Luzerne County with roars and buzz each Sunday and

drawing big crowds such as when legendary racer Richard Petty showed in his ‘64 Barracuda.

The quarter-mile track and its operations, however, closed in 1972, reverting back to the quietude of woods in subsequent decades.

Now, the 278-acre parcel on Meadow Run, not far from Route 115, will be permanently preserved. Natural Lands, a large conservation land trust based in Media, announced earlier this week that it had purchased the property and turned it over to Pennsylvania Game Commission to be folded into State Game Land No. 91, opening

it to the public for hunting and recreation.

“We’re delighted these 278 acres will never be developed and will be enjoyed by generations to come,” Todd Sampsell, vice president of conservation for Natural Lands, said in the announcement.

From drag strip to haven

The game commission plans to raze old buildings on the site, including the concession stand and starting gate. Nature has reclaimed most of the areas used for the old strip.

Natural Lands said the property

→ SEE POCONO ON B3



Natural Lands, a conservation land trust based in Media, has acquired the former Pocono Drag Lodge in Luzerne County, and turned it over to the Pennsylvania Game Commission for preservation. Natural Lands

PHILLY & REGION

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Scene Through the Lens

The large menorah erected by the American Friends of Lubavitch in Independence Mall casts a wide shadow. The eight days of Hanukkah began at sunset Sunday evening. A menorah was first lighted in front of Independence Hall in 1974. More of photographer Tom Gralish's visual exploration of our region can be seen in his blog at [Inquirer.com/sceneontheroad](https://www.inquirer.com/sceneontheroad). Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer

Motorist is killed in Delco

By Melanie Burney
Staff Writer

A Delaware man who stepped out of his disabled car on Route 202 in Concord Township, Delaware County, was killed after he was struck by a passing vehicle early Sunday morning, Pennsylvania State Police said.

The accident occurred shortly before 4 a.m. after the vehicle pulled onto Route 202 southbound facing traffic, according to police. The motorist, identified as Ankur Bansal, 27, got out of his car on the passenger side on the shoulder of the highway, police said.

Bansal, of Bear, was standing in the traffic lane when he was struck by a passing Toyota FJ Cruiser, police said. The 56-year-old SUV driver remained on the scene and was not injured.

It was not immediately known why Bansal stopped his vehicle. He was pronounced dead at the scene. Police did not provide information about his vehicle.

The roadway was dry, police said. No charges were filed, and the investigation continues.

mburney@inquirer.com
215-854-4568
@mlburney



(From left) Sister Pat Smith, Sister Debbie Krist, Katela Villasenor, Sister Esther Anderson, Sister Bernadette Brazil, and Kayla Patino. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer

Neumann

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glad that Neumann became the new owner of the convent property because it likely will carry on the sisters' legacy as their numbers dwindle.

The Sisters of St. Francis founded Neumann, then called Our Lady of Angels College, in 1965. At one time, as many as 120 sisters lived in the 152,000-square-foot convent, built in the late 1800s. At its peak more than six decades ago, the order had about 1,600 sisters. By the time Neumann purchased the convent, the number of sisters had fallen to 360. Sisters are spread among 19 states, along with Ireland, and Africa. The median age of sisters who live at the convent is 82.

Given the proximity of the convent and its connection to Neumann, sisters over the years have been no strangers to students. They have attended student games and plays. Before retirement, many of the sisters taught in K-12 Catholic schools and colleges.

But actually living together has given both students and nuns a new awareness of each other.

"You look at sisters and think of them as always very strict and not people themselves," said Kayla Patino, 19, a nursing major from Springfield. "Living with them made me realize that they were people before they became sisters."

There are heavenly perks, too.

"They prayed for us for our finals, which I'm still thankful for," Villasenor said.

Students have been attending sisters' events at the convent. Earlier this month, they went to a Mass where sisters renewed their vows, then joined the nuns for doughnuts. Sisters have been regulars at students' events, too. At a recent "novelty night," they designed Christmas ornaments and stockings and drank hot chocolate. It's also where Villasenor and Anderson got their bunny-ear photo booth shots.

"I love the students," said Sister Bernadette Brazil, 77. "I'm going to too many parties, though."

Students and sisters recently gathered to make TikTok videos, dancing and wiggling their way to music.

"Do you want to see it?" Villasenor asked after they made the TikTok.

"Nooooooo," Anderson said.

Even students who haven't spent as much time with the sisters said they like the space in the sprawling convent. Their bedrooms have more square footage than other dorms. They share a bathroom with only one student; in other dorms, they share with two or three. There are laundry facilities on each floor, as opposed to one set per building. The university did some minor renovations before students moved in.

"I think it's better," said Joe McFiberesima, 23, a junior computer information system major from Philadelphia.

Chris Domes, president of Neumann, said the university, which enrolls about 650 residential students, has had a dorm-room waiting list for a while, and the convent helped to ease the crunch. More than 80 students applied to live in the convent, more than it could accommodate this year, he said.

Over time, more students will move in, Domes said.

There were questions and a little



Sophomore Katela Villasenor and Sister Esther Anderson strike some poses in a photo booth at Neumann University in Aston. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer

anxiety before the move-in, Domes said, but they quickly dissolved. Students and nuns aren't on top of each other. Students are in one section of the building, the sisters in another.

"We don't make much noise; they don't make much noise," Villasenor

said. "I'm very grateful to be living here. And if I could choose to, I would probably live here again."

ssnyder@inquirer.com
215-854-4693
@ssnyderinq

LOTTERIES

Drawn daily unless otherwise noted. Those drawn after 8 p.m. are too late to make our print deadline.

MULTISTATE

Dec. 17 (Mon., Wed., Sat.)									
Powerball	33	56	64	66	68	(12)			
Powerplay x2									
Double Play	6	9	10	19	28	(23)			
Dec. 16 (Tue., Fri.)									
Mega Millions	8	35	40	53	56	(11)			
Megaplier x3									
Dec. 18									
Cash4Life	2	15	25	43	49	(3)			

PENNSYLVANIA				1-800-692-7481			
Dec. 18							
Pick 2 afternoon				7	7	(6)	
Pick 2 evening				7	9	(4)	
Pick 3 afternoon			1	1	7	(6)	
Pick 3 evening			8	9	3	(4)	
Pick 4 afternoon		3	8	7	8	(6)	
Pick 4 evening		1	1	4	3	(4)	
Pick 5 afternoon	2	0	4	2	7	(6)	
Pick 5 evening	7	0	5	0	9	(4)	
Treasure Hunt		1	4	17	24	28	
Cash 5		10	16	17	24	40	
Match 6	2	12	13	36	37	42	

NEW JERSEY		609-599-5800				
Dec. 18						
Pick 3 afternoon		7	5	3	(3)	
Pick 4 afternoon	7	6	9	8	(3)	
Dec. 17						
Pick 3 evening		8	5	5	(3)	
Pick 4 evening	0	2	2	8	(3)	
Dec. 17						
Cash 5	5	16	19	26	39	
Xtra x2						
Dec. 15 (Mon., Thu.)						
Pick 6 Xtra	12	21	30	32	39	40
Double Play	6	8	9	21	30	36

DELAWARE		302-739-5291			
Dec. 17 (Mon.-Sat.)					
Play 3 afternoon		4	3	1	
Play 4 afternoon	2	2	8	9	
Dec. 18					
Play 3 evening		7	9	6	
Play 4 evening	0	4	1	1	
Dec. 16 (Mon., Wed., Fri.)					
MultiWin Lotto	3	4	7	22	31 35
Dec. 17 (Mon., Wed., Sat.)					
Lotto America	7	12	16	40	49 (1)
Bonus x5					
Dec. 17					
Lucky for Life	8	12	36	39	47 (14)