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# The Meadville Tribune

\$2.00

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THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025

## KNOWLEDGE is POWER



### Ainsworth Foundation funding touchpad education program for preschoolers

By Keith Gushard  
MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

To help preschoolers prepare for kindergarten and to learn to read, the Ainsworth Foundation is funding a pilot program of educational electronic touchpads for underserved 3- and 4-year-olds in the Meadville area.

The foundation has partnered with ApSeed, an early childhood education nonprofit based in Salisbury, North Carolina, to provide 900 prekindergarten touchpads. The devices will be distributed in the coming weeks through nine Meadville-area nonprofit groups.

ApSeed's electronic touchpad has multiple preschool-specific educational games. The games focus on four building blocks of reading — letters, numbers, shapes and colors, according to Ainsworth and ApSeed officials.

The touchpads are safe and secure as they are self-contained, having no wifi connection, no internet connection and no camera.

ApSeed's program has been around since 2016 and it's distributed more than 30,000 touchpads to children in North Carolina, South Carolina, Arizona and several countries.



SHANNON ROAE/Meadville Tribune photos

Jason Nesbitt, executive director of Center for Family Services, holds one of the self-contained touchpads with educational games for preschoolers. The Ainsworth Foundation is providing funding to give about 900 tablets to underserved 3- and 4-year-olds in the Meadville area.

The Ainsworth Foundation is a nonprofit charitable foundation based in Saegertown. It was formed by the Lang family fol-

lowing the 2018 sale of its Meadville-based Ainsworth Pet Food business. The foundation's focus has been on education, public and

pet health, environmental issues and economic development.

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## More police changes planned after basketball brawl

By Mike Crowley  
MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

Meadville Area Senior High (MASH) sporting events typically feature lots of black and red clothing in the stands.

Fans at Bulldogs home games soon will be seeing plenty of blue, too.

An increased police presence leads the list of changes enumerated in an action plan submitted by Crawford Central School District to the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA). The plan comes in the aftermath of a March 7 brawl during a boys basketball game between Meadville and Uniontown that led to charges against seven people and a double forfeiture in the first-round playoff contest. After disqualifying both schools from this year's tournament, PIAA imposed several requirements, including the action plans, that must be met in order for the schools to avoid being banned from the 2025-26 tournament as well.

Meadville's plan has been approved by PIAA Executive Director Robert Lombardi, according to Crawford Central Superintendent Jenn Galdon. An additional safety plan for referees will be submitted this week, she added.

Galdon was clear regarding the outcomes expected from the plan, which is already being put into effect.

"I expect to see respect," she said in an email, "for students, coaches, referees, game personnel, booster concessions, custodians, parents."

The action plan calls for one to two police officers to be present at each MASH

SEE **CHANGES**, PAGE A8

## Bills on swatting, false threats against schools gain support

By Eric Scicchitano  
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HARRISBURG — Efforts renewed Tuesday in the Pennsylvania Senate to strengthen punishment for false threats of violence against schools and raising false alarms that lead to swatting incidents.

Members of a Senate judiciary committee voted to advance the two measures in separate 11-3 votes with two Democrats joining all Republicans



Sen. Michele Brooks

the state House.

Brooks' bill proposes the creation

in support. The bills move closer to a vote by the full Senate.

Senate Bill 96 from Republican Sen. Michele Brooks, whose 50th District includes Crawford County, is reintroduced from last session. The bill was approved by the upper chamber but lost momentum when reaching

of a third-degree felony charge of terroristic threats against public and non-public school entities as well as higher education facilities.

Anyone convicted under the charge could be required to pay back costs for the emergency response including salary and overtime both for first responders and workers affected by an evacuation under false claims. They could also be held liable for costs of equipment, supplies and even wasted food in a school cafeteria.

A fatal school shooting in Nashville, Tennessee, in 2023 inspired

Brooks to introduce the bill. The shooting spurred a series of hoax calls to 911 centers threatening schools, leading to emergency responses, building evacuations, and resulting anxieties about the potential for violence.

Republican state Sen. Lisa Baker, chair of the Judiciary Committee, said nearly a dozen schools in her district alone were targeted with false reports.

Senate Bill 175 from Democratic state Sen. Vincent Hughes offered similar legislation to Brooks. Sen.

Wayne Langerhale is also a prime sponsor of the proposal.

The bill seeks enhanced penalties for false reports that lead to swatting — false reports of violent acts or the threat of self-harm that lead to a heavy police response including SWAT teams.

It would also seek financial restitution that could fall on the parents or guardians of a juvenile convicted under the proposed law. Current language allows for the potential to modify or cancel costs depending on circumstances.

### Good Morning

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Thank you for subscribing, Stan and Pat Weyman of Linesville

#### Weather

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Tomorrow: Rain, 56

#### Deaths

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## Police, family, friends pay tribute to long-time officer Wise

By Keith Gushard  
MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

Fellow law enforcement, friends and family turned out Wednesday to pay respects to a man who served more than 50 years as a police officer in Crawford County.

Rose and Waid Funeral Home was overflowing with uniformed officers from various departments, plus family and friends, in tribute to Sgt. Rod Wise, who died at age 70 at his Meadville-area home on March 20.

"He was a good guy — he got along with everybody," said Jack Brickner, a retired police officer who worked with Wise in two departments in the area. "I did my first police internship with him my last semester in college when he was chief at Conneaut Lake Park."

Later, Brickner and Wise both became members of Meadville Police Department, sworn in on the same day in 1981, Brickner recalled.

Wise's forte was dealing with people — and also dealing with traffic violations, according to fellow officers who knew and worked with him.

"He had those eyes — you'd be



SHANNON ROAE/Meadville Tribune

Family members of Sgt. Rod Wise watch as local law enforcement officers perform a 21-gun salute during a funeral Wednesday evening at Rose and Waid Funeral Home.

driving with him and he'd say, 'You see that?' and I'd be looking for a fight or something," Brickner said. "He'd say 'Expired' and he could see the (expired) inspection sticker on a car going the other way," he said with a chuckle.

Crawford County Sheriff Dave Powers said he learned a lot from Wise when Powers joined Meadville's police force.

"Rod was good with people," Powers said. "He was one of my training officers. I learned how important it

was dealing with people — keeping a level head."

West Mead Township Police Chief Chip Brown called Wise "the greatest PR (public relations) officer that there was. Somebody was out mowing a yard or raking leaves, he'd stop and talk with them.

"Everybody knew Rod," Brown said.

"If they didn't know him, they had just moved to Meadville," Brickner added.

Wise's law enforcement career began in the 1970s as chief of police at the former Conneaut Lake Park. He then went to Meadville Police Department. Following his retirement from Meadville, Wise joined the Crawford County Sheriff's Department as a deputy and also joined West Mead Township Police Department part-time. He later became a full-time officer with West Mead and was a sergeant with the township at the time of his death.

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