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IN BRIEF

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WASHINGTON

Casey looks to protect elderly from costs

U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Scranton, pushed Thursday to protect Pennsylvania's Medicare beneficiaries who may be unknowingly racking up thousands of dollars for skilled nursing care that Medicare doesn't reimburse.

Currently, Medicare will cover post-acute care in a skilled nursing facility only if a patient has three consecutive days of hospitalization as an inpatient, not counting the day of discharge. Because of the uptick in observation cases, patients are enduring lengthier hospital stays in observation status and may unknowingly be treated under outpatient observation status for the entirety of their hospital visit.

When this happens, the beneficiaries' skilled nursing facility benefit is not activated and Medicare will not cover their stay in a nursing home, causing them to face thousands of dollars in bills when they are discharged. Under the Casey-backed, bipartisan plan, the Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act, "observation" stays will be counted toward the three-day mandatory inpatient stay for Medicare to cover post-hospital nursing home care.

PLAINS TWP.

Crime watch meeting set for Tuesday

The Plains Neighborhood Crime Watch members will hold their monthly meeting on Tuesday 7 p.m. At the Fox Hill Firehouse, 50 Second St., Plains Township. Refreshments are to be served.

SCRANTON

Marshals Service finds fugitive

U.S. Marshal Martin J. Pane said the U.S. Marshals Service arrested Thomas McCarty in a remote section of Wyoming County near Tunkhannock on Thursday without incident.

McCarty, 48, was being sought by the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole for violating the conditions of his state parole and had been a fugitive for eight years.

McCarty has a criminal history dating back almost 30 years for sex-assault offenses in Lycoming and Northumberland counties, Pane said in a news release. In March 2005, McCarty stopped reporting to state parole authorities and disappeared. In May 2005, the state Board of Probation and Parole classified him as a fugitive from justice.

Deputy U.S. Marshals from Scranton and Williamsport, along with task force personnel, located McCarty at a remote location off of Rockledge Road. McCarty is being lodged at the State Correctional Institution in Waymart.

NICHOLSON

Group looks into station restoration

The Nicholson Heritage Association wants to restore the historic Delaware, Lackawanna and Western railroad station to serve as a visitors center and entrance to the Viaduct Valley Way Scenic Byway in the town.

With an Endless Mountains Heritage Region grant through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the association will do feasibility study to see what it would cost to restore the building.

The station was originally built by one of the DL&W's predecessors, the Liggett's Gap Railroad, in 1849. The station permanently closed in 1971. It was sold in 1983 to a local business and was in private use until purchased by the heritage association last year.

The feasibility study is one step toward rehabilitating the station. Donations are still needed and can be mailed to the Association at P.O. Box 496, Nicholson, PA 18446. For more information, visit www.nicholsonstation.org.