



# Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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Ruth DeBar, left, Sharon Lukas and Lyudmyla Pavlyshyn share a laugh at Pitt's Christmas Day event at The Eatery in Oakland. Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

## MIDEAST CONFLICT Egypt floats plan to end fighting

By Samy Magdy, Najib Jobain and Josef Federman  
Associated Press

CAIRO — Israel and Hamas on Monday gave cool public receptions to an Egyptian proposal to end their bitter war. But the long-standing enemies stopped short of rejecting the plan altogether, raising the possibility of a new round of diplomacy to halt a devastating Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip.

The Egyptian plan calls for a phased hostage release and the formation of a Palestinian government of experts to administer the Gaza Strip and occupied West Bank, according to a senior Egyptian official and a European diplomat familiar with the proposal.

The Egyptian official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the proposal, said the details were worked out with the Gulf nation of Qatar and presented to Israel, Hamas, the United States and European governments. Egypt and Qatar both mediate between Israel and Hamas, while the U.S. is Israel's closest ally and a key power in the region.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not comment directly on the proposal. But speaking to members of his Likud Party, he said he was determined to press ahead with Israel's offensive, launched in response to an Oct. 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people and took 240 others hostage.

"We are expanding the fight in the coming days and this will be a long battle and it isn't close to finished," he said.

Hamas has continued to fire rockets into Israel throughout the fighting. Late Monday, it launched a barrage of rockets, triggering air raid sirens in the southern city of Ashkelon. AP video showed what

SEE **WAR**, PAGE A-5

## 'Happy and ready to serve'

### Pitt provides record 500 meals at Christmas Day event

By Steve Bohnel  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

As Joseph Irvin enjoyed a Christmas Day lunch in The Eatery at the University of Pittsburgh's Litchfield Towers complex, the Pittsburgh native reflected on what was a sort of homecoming — he recently

moved back to the area after spending more than two years in North Carolina.

Mr. Irvin, 61, had just gotten out of the hospital after receiving treatment for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It's an illness he believes he acquired from working in construction at the old Macy's building in Downtown in the early 1990s.

A self-described loner and McKeesport resident, his doctor at UPMC suggested he go to this annual Christmas Day event hosted by Pitt where those in need can receive a hot meal.

If not for his illness, Mr. Irvin said he would volunteer — just like the more than 100 people who were at the ready on Monday, waiting on people enjoying

traditional staples of a holiday meal: turkey, stuffing, mac and cheese and Brussels sprouts along with cookies, carrot cake and Rice Krispies Treats. And despite a fit of coughing and his health conditions, he is thankful for what he has.

"God bless me for what I have

SEE **SERVE**, PAGE A-2

## Locals are signing up to be citizen scientists

### Residents survey birds, waterways for studies

By Mary Ann Thomas  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

This summer, volunteers trained at Moraine State Park to collect samples of potential algae blooms and assess erosion in streams in Allegheny County parks.

Hundreds of residents join research programs annually to tally birds, tiny invertebrates and frogs and note when tree buds leaf out. They are even counting bumblebees.

These volunteers are the boots on the ground for large- and small-scale

environmental fieldwork. And their numbers are growing, according to study managers.

For more than 30 summers, Mike Fialkovich, 58, of Churchill, has driven the same 25-mile route among farms and subdivisions in Butler County. He stops every half-mile for three minutes with a birding friend to listen for robins, blackbirds, swallows, crows and more.

The data is submitted to the Breeding Bird Survey to gauge the trends of breeding birds.

Trained in environmental biology, Mr. Fialkovich is vice president of the Three Rivers Birding Club. He participates in a slew of avian surveys year-round.

Why does he do it?

SEE **BIRDS**, PAGE A-2

## Pittsburgh sign painters keep a centuries-old trade alive

By Ciara McEneaney  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Nestled in the neighborhood of Lawrenceville is a small sky blue building with a dinosaur painted on it and loud music coming from inside.

Inside is Andrew Paul, owner of Run Rabbit Gilding, who specializes in traditional sign painting, a trade that has existed for more than 100 years.

"I've always been obsessed with letterpress, the sort of old forms of industry, industrial out-

put, that sort of thing, like screen printing," he said. "Jill Welsh, a sign painter in Butler, said, 'If you're a human being and painting something, they'll see your heartbeat in it.'"

"I like to see and feel that sort of heartbeat."

In Pittsburgh, a city of old buildings, traditional sign paintings are ubiquitous. We've all seen them: They serve as landmarks and echoes of a Pittsburgh that once was and still is. Painted

SEE **SIGN**, PAGE A-9



Sebastian Foltz/Post-Gazette

Sign maker Andrew Paul demonstrates his painting technique at his Run Rabbit Gilding workshop in Lawrenceville.



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### Weather

Cloudy and mild with a little rain. Daytime high, 55; tonight's low, 49.

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