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## A NEW YEAR’S TRADITION



People jump into the Monongahela River during the Pittsburgh Polar Bear Club’s annual New Year’s Day plunge on Thursday. The event raises money for WTAE-TV’s Project Bundle-Up, which provides winter clothing for local children and seniors through The Salvation Army.

Giuseppe LoPiccolo/Post-Gazette photos

# ‘SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM’

Dozens take polar plunge in Mon River to celebrate new year



A man helps another plunge participant out of the Monongahela River on Thursday.

By Lindsay Shachnow  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Frank Nelson has started the year by jumping into the ice cold Monongahela River for the better part of his life. The 77-year-old from North Huntingdon still remembers the first time he took the polar plunge at the Mon Wharf — he was just a teenager. It was 28 degrees outside, he said, and the water was about 35. “I never wanted to do it again, but I continue to do it,” said Mr. Nelson, who wore a matching cap and pajama pants adorned with polar bears.

Sixty-one years later, Mr. Nelson says he can’t shake the tradition. And the Franklin Regional swim and diving coach has gotten some of his students in on it, too. “Instead of having practice in the pool, we’ll have practice in the river,” he said. Mr. Nelson is one of dozens of people who rang in the New Year by jumping into the frigid river via the snow-covered Mon Wharf on Thursday. Temperatures hovered below 20 degrees as participants geared up for this year’s polar plunge, which came after snow blanketed the city the night

SEE PLUNGE, PAGE A-2

## PENNWEST CALIFORNIA

# Alumni alarmed by recommended cuts

Three arts majors may be eliminated

By Maddie Aiken  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Rebecca Hersan needed to commute to college for her art education degree because of job obligations and a death in her family. When weighing her options, she also didn’t want to deal with city traffic or parking. That’s how Ms. Hersan,

then living in Scott, ended up at what’s currently PennWest California. Now an art teacher at South Fayette Middle School, Ms. Hersan said the campus’ “strong” art education program taught her not only the arts, but also communication and critical thinking skills. So when Ms. Hersan learned last month that dozens of PennWest’s majors, minors and concentrations — including California’s art

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Giuseppe LoPiccolo/Post-Gazette

**ASNOWY NEW YEAR’S DAY** A person prepares to cross Forbes Avenue on Thursday. Friday is expected to be slightly less cold, with a high of 27 and low of 16. **Weather, Page B-12**

## SWITZERLAND

# 40 DEAD, 115 HURT IN FIRE AT RESORT

Blaze tore through bar amid New Year festivities

By Jamey Keaten, Stefanie Dazio and John Leicester  
Associated Press

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland — About 40 people were killed and another 115 injured, most of them seriously, after a fire ripped through a bar’s New Year celebration in a Swiss Alpine resort less than two hours after midnight Thursday, police said. Authorities did not immediately have an exact count of the deceased. The Crans-Montana resort is best known as an international ski and golf venue, and overnight, its crowded Le Constellation bar morphed from a scene of revelry into the site of one of Switzerland’s worst tragedies. The country will hold five days of mourning.

Valais Canton police commander Frédéric Gisler said during a news conference that work is underway to identify the victims and inform their families, adding that the community is “devastated.” Thirteen of the wounded were Italian citizens, and another six Italians are unaccounted for, Italy’s ambassador to Switzerland, Gian Lorenzo Cornado, told state-run RAI television.

Beatrice Pilloud, Valais Canton attorney general, said it was too early to determine the cause of the fire. Experts have not yet been able to go inside the wreckage.

SEE FIRE, PAGE A-10

# Trump says he regrets CT scan

Defends health, energy amid ‘normal’ test results

By Michelle L. Price  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump defended his energy and health in an interview with The Wall Street Journal and disclosed that he had a CT scan, not an MRI scan, during an October examination about which he and the White House delayed offering details. Trump, in the interview, said he regretted undergoing the advanced imaging on his heart and abdomen during an October visit to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center because it raised public questions about his health. His physician said in a memo the White House released in December that he had “advanced imaging” as a preventative screening for men his age.

Trump had initially described it as an MRI but said he didn’t know what part of his body he had scanned. A CT scan is a quicker form of diagnostic imaging than an MRI but offers less detail about

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**Weather**  
Partly sunny, not as cold. Daytime high, 27; tonight’s low, 16. **Page B-12**

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