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'Annie' soars with talent on stage, in audience

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With a strong, clear voice and theatrical poise that belied her youth, Heidi Gray, an Augusta, Georgia, native, lifted “Annie” to new heights during opening night Friday at the Scranton Cultural Center at the Masonic Temple.

Supported by a half dozen fellow “orphan” girls — in particular, Annabelle Wachtel as Molly, the smallest of the group, proved a scene stealer capable of holding her own among the bigger kids and even the grownups throughout — Heidi also had

audience members, at least half of whom were school-aged themselves, singing along to classics such as “It’s a Hard Knock Life” from the start of the two-hour show.

The Broadway Theatre League of Northeastern Pennsylvania production offered a fresh take on the beloved musical, which has seen countless incarnations since the Annie character debuted in a James Whitcomb poem in 1885. The most recent version to reinvigorate interest in “Annie” was a movie starring Academy Award and Golden Globe nominee Quvenzhané Wallis in 2014.

The tale of the tyke who overcomes scams and indentured servitude with her signature optimism and sunny disposition in Depression-era New York City has captured

hearts young and old for decades.

The nationally touring adaptation seen in Scranton was no different in that way.

Of note among the leading adult members of the cast was Lynn Andrews as Miss Hennigan, the headmistress of the orphanage, who harbors more bitters for Annie than the stiff drink that's never far from her hand.

Ms. Andrews' patient, dry delivery and physical comedy in numbers such as "Little Girls" and "Easy Street" earned her a spot in the company of other great Miss Hennigans of past, including Carol Burnett (who starred in the 1982 film version).

Spotted among the audience was Laurine Carey of Jessup and her daughter, Peyton,

who was decked out in Annie garb from head to toe, including the iconic red wig and dress. The 3-year-old was Annie for Halloween, even winning a contest for her likeness, and excitedly watched the stage production from the fifth row.

"She's been watching the movies since she was 2," her mom explained. "She's mesmerized. She loves Annie."

Judging by the choruses of "Tomorrow" being sung as the rest of the crowd filed out of the theater Friday night, she's not the only one.

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Family of new mother seeks damages in malpractice suit

WILKES-BARRE — The day after giving birth to her first-born son, Pittston resident Candice L. Perrillo posed for a smiling picture from the wheelchair she needed because of extreme pain, touching her premature baby through the side of an incubator. (read more)



WOLF-TV seeking local news staff

PLAINS TWP.— WOLF-TV, a Fox-affiliated television station for Northeast Pennsylvania with offices on Route 315 in Plains Twp., is looking to hire its own local news staff. (read more)



Candidates for 17th seat tout differences

BETHLEHEM — Democrat U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright and Republican challenger Matt Connolly made their cases to voters Tuesday evening during a televised debate at PBS39. (read more)



Trump coming to Wilkes-Barre Monday

WILKES-BARRE TWP. — Donald Trump is coming back to Luzerne County. The Republican presidential nominee will hold a campaign event at 6 p.m. Monday at Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza. (read more)





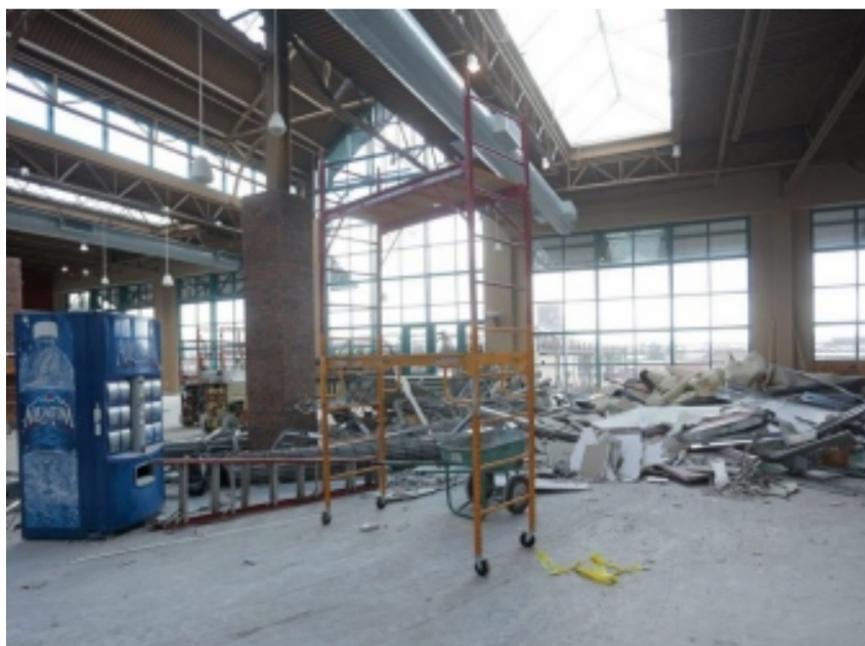
Man arrested for burglary in Blakely

BLAKELY — When a Blakely man broke into a borough home Tuesday morning, he demanded wine but settled for an umbrella, police said. ([read more](#))



Lackawanna College to receive grant to expand culinary arts program

Gov. Tom Wolf set the table for an expansion of Lackawanna College's culinary arts program Monday by serving up a \$3 million state grant. (read more)



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The Scranton Public Market in the Marketplace at Steamtown should be open in time to greet hungry holiday shoppers. (read more)



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