



**CHRISTMAS
TALE OF SMALL
MIRACLES**
LIFE, B5



BLESSED
CANCER PATIENT, PARENTS
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LOCAL, B1

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Landmark health bill on track

Senate, House must reconcile drafts;
Obama: 'We are incredibly close'



AP/CHARLES DHARAPAK

After the Thursday morning passage of the Senate health care reform bill, President Barack Obama, joined by Vice President Joe Biden, hailed the measure as "historic."

INSIDE

The contents of the Senate's health care reform bill. **A2**

Delawareans cheer extending coverage,
but remain wary of reform plan's details

By RACHEL KIPP
The News Journal

President Barack Obama lauded the Senate's historic Christmas Eve passage of the health care reform bill as the most important piece of social legislation since Social Security. Delawareans were a bit more skeptical. They cheered the proposed extension of coverage to millions of uninsured Americans, including an estimated 105,000 in the First State, as a significant step forward in the nation's history. But many wondered what the legislation would look like after what are expected to be arduous negotiations to reconcile the House and Senate versions.

"There's a potential for it to be the biggest thing since Social Security; obviously it's the biggest thing since Medicare and Medicaid," said Wayne Smith, president and CEO of the Delaware Healthcare Association, the trade group that lobbies for the state's hospitals. "After this, there should be less uninsured, that's a good thing just morally and we're a compassionate nation." Octavio Sanchez, 37, an industrial mechanic who has been out of work for about six months because of a back injury, hopes it will help uninsured people like him receive medical care while between jobs. There are so many Third World countries that do a better job at insuring their people than we do, he said.

See **LOCAL** — **A2**

By DAVID ESPO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Months ago, a delegation of Republican senators went to the White House with a request for President Barack Obama to take a more gradual approach to health care. He demurred, according to one official familiar with the meeting, saying that's not what he promised when he ran for the White House. Now, with multiple trade-offs made, Obama and his Democratic allies stand one final compromise shy of the sweeping success he envisioned. In an epic struggle settled at dawn, the Democratic-controlled Senate passed health care legisla-

tion Thursday, a triumph for Obama that clears the way for compromise talks with the House on a bill to reduce the ranks of the uninsured and rein in the insurance industry. The vote was 60-39, strictly along party lines, one day after Democrats succeeded in crushing a filibuster by Republicans eager — yet unable — to inflict a year-end political defeat on the White House. At the White House, Obama called the vote historic, and said because of it, "we are incredibly close to making health insurance reform a reality in this country. Our challenge now is to finish the job."

See **BILLS** — **A2**

Bereavement counselor inspires others with his openness, courage



Special to The News Journal/JASON PREZANT

Alex Tyree chats with his wife, Cheri (left), and family friend Alice Smith during a coffee hour at Saints Andrew and Matthew Episcopal Church in Wilmington. In June, Tyree was diagnosed with inoperable gastric cancer and was told he only had six months to a year to live.

His time at hand, caregiver is at peace

As Delaware Hospice bereavement counselor Alex Tyree was visiting Mary Moller of Pike Creek, he realized she was approaching what he calls the Great Moment of Transition. Tyree asked her husband, Kurt, to talk to his wife about their life together, which Kurt Moller did for 30 minutes. Then Tyree sang "How Great Thou Art" and "Amazing Grace," two of Mary Moller's favorite hymns. "It was moving and beautiful," says Kurt Moller, who is grateful for Tyree's sensitivity, almost a dozen years after his wife's death. "This was a gift to me and a gift to Mary. I only hope that Alex can experience something as beautiful when he passes on." Tyree expects to find out soon. After 18 years as a chaplain and bereavement counselor with hospice, a comprehensive service for the families of patients with a terminal illness, Tyree is now a hospice patient himself. In June, he was given six months to a year to live with inoperable gastric cancer. Today, as he celebrates what may be his last Christmas, he believes life and death are filled with what he calls "The Big Love," a way of speaking of the wonder of God. Tyree believes that the wonder of a new adventure grows when the soul gives up the body and crosses into a realm that many call heaven.

INSIDE

Alex Tyree explains how to help the terminally ill cope. **A8**

See **TRANSITION** — **A8**

Monitoring to continue at prisons, but progress cited

Federal officials loosen control,
saying health system improves

By ESTEBAN PARRA
The News Journal

The Delaware Department of Correction will remain under federal supervision, even though it has made significant progress under a three-year mandate to improve prison health care, the U.S. Justice Department concluded. The two-year extension of federal control made public Thursday also will be less stringent because the state prison system has met 214 of 217 provisions — 98 percent — in the original agreement that put it under Justice Department scrutiny. As a result, Baylor Women's Correctional Institution and the medical care portion of Sussex Correctional Institution will not be included under the extended agreement, officials said. Mental health care provided at the Georgetown prison will continue to be under review. Young Correctional Institution in Wilmington and Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna remain entirely under federal scrutiny. "I am pleased to sign this agreement," said Carl C. Danberg, state prison commissioner. "Significant progress has been made as we continue to address the needs of inmate health care, and that effort is acknowledged in this new agreement." Delaware entered the agreement with the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division after a 2005 series in The News Journal that pointed to problems with prison health care and high inmate death rates, especially from AIDS. Other findings in the newspaper's six-month investigation included an outbreak of flesh-eating bacteria and an inmate who suffered from a massive brain tumor, which led to the prison nickname "The Brother With Two Heads." That inmate, 21-year-old Anthony Pierce, has since died. Despite protests from state officials and a letter from then-Gov. Ruth Ann Minner to



Carl C. Danberg, state prison commissioner, says he is pleased with the progress and the new agreement.

See **PRISONS** — **A6**

TODAY'S WEATHER
Details on A4

43 / 38
Wilmington:
Rain. Winds 10-15 mph.

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inside



**WOMAN
ATTACKS
POPE**
Pope Benedict XVI unhurt in incident at the beginning of Christmas Eve Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. **A3**

**A WET - AND
ICY - HOLIDAY**
Expect rain all day today, which could turn to ice at night. **LOCAL, B1**

**TOP TEN SPOTS
TO RING IN A
NEW DECADE**
55hours PLUS

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