



The Trussville Tribune

November 19 — 25, 2014

Your news source for Trussville, Clay and Pinson

50¢

Clay cleaners robbed at gunpoint last week

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Elite Dry Cleaning on Deerfoot Parkway in Clay was allegedly robbed at gunpoint at around 4:15 p.m. last Tuesday.

The business is located next to Piggly Wiggly.

According to sources, two male suspects were involved in the alleged robbery and fled on foot near the Eagle Ridge subdivision on Old Springville Road.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office never responded to requests seeking comment on the robbery.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussville-tribune.com and follow him on Twitter @ GaryALloyd.

Trial date set in Matt Pitt impersonating officer case

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

A trial date has been set in the 2013 case of The Basement founder and youth evangelist Matt Pitt allegedly impersonating a peace officer in Grayson Valley.

The case is set for April 20, 2015, at 9 a.m. in Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge Tommy Nail's courtroom.

Pitt's lead attorney, Carmella Penn, said the trial date was set last Wednesday at a pre-trial conference.

"There is no plan at this



file photo by Gary Lloyd

The Basement founder Matt Pitt leaves Shelby County Jail on Palm Sunday earlier this year.

time to make any kind of a plea," Penn said.

Pitt pleaded guilty in Shelby County in 2012 when he

was charged with impersonating an officer after Calera police pulled him over for allegedly flashing blue lights

on Interstate 65.

Pitt served about eight months in Shelby County Jail for violating probation after he was arrested for impersonating a peace officer for a second time in June 2013 when he allegedly showed a badge to two men in the woods in Grayson Valley and claimed to be with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office.

Pitt was indicted on the charge earlier this year.

During a preliminary hearing that was held in December 2013 to determine if there

see PITT page 3

Radio Shack robbery suspect is CCHS student

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Trussville Police Department Capt. Jeff Bridges confirmed Tuesday that one suspect arrested in the Nov. 15 robbery of Radio Shack on Chalkville Mountain Road in Trussville is a Clay-Chalkville High School student.

Bridges said one 17-year-old juvenile stu-



photo by Scott Buttram

The scene at Radio Shack on Saturday night

dent from Clay-Chalkville is charged with first-degree robbery. His bond is \$40,000, Bridges said.

see ROBBERY page 2

TRAVELING TRASHED Clay-Chalkville students experience driving under influence, learn dangers

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Thirty Clay-Chalkville High School students last week got the chance to feel what it's like to drive under the influence of alcohol and drive distracted.

Over the past 10 years, Clay-Chalkville High School health education teacher Marsha Hancock has taken her sophomore students to the Trussville Play Station to participate in a program called DUI Experience.

"This program went along with my curriculum on drinking/driving, texting/driving and the use of seat belts," Hancock said.

Teachers and teenage drivers from Curry High School also participated in the experience, which was hosted by State Farm, Trussville Play Station, Alabama State Troop-



photo by Ron Burkett

A student attempts to navigate around the orange cones while wearing "Fatal Vision" goggles last week at the Trussville Play Station.

ers, Jefferson State Community College and Children's of Alabama.

"They are doing research on teen driving through various activities and allowing the students to evaluate the dangers they face when driving," Hancock said prior to

the event.

The event featured hands-on demonstrations of the dangers of driving while distracted or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. On the mini-golf course, students learned about distractions by trying to play putt-putt while eating,

texting, talking on the phone and applying makeup.

The event also featured various teaching stations and guest speakers who talked with students. One event was driving go-carts wearing "Fa-

see DRIVING page 4

Stretch of Turkey Creek restored to prevent bank erosion

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

A project two years in the making was completed last week at Turkey Creek Nature Preserve in Pinson.

Workers and volunteers Friday were busy removing invasive plant species, such as English ivy, wisteria and privet, and replacing them with native plants in an effort to prevent further

bank erosion.

The National Wildlife Federation 5-Star Stream Bank Restoration project's goal was to restore the habitat for the endangered vermilion darter and protect a historic bridge that has spanned the creek since 1919. Preserve Manager Charles Yeager said the creek through the 100-foot by 75-foot work area used to be deep enough to dive into from the



photo by Gary Lloyd

The historic bridge that spans Turkey Creek in Pinson

bridge, but sediment from development upstream has filled the creek and caused banks to erode. The water is about 6 inches deep in this area now. A gravel bar visible near the bridge wasn't present a year ago.

"This is why we're losing the darter habitat," Yeager said.

The restoration effort also includes a new set of stone steps from the bank to the water's edge, in an area

that's currently not open to the public, but might be sometime in the future.

Over the last year, Yeager said, volunteers have worked to clear the privet and wisteria. Two days last week, Action Environmental was on site, finishing the project with the installation of the stone steps for educational programs. More than 30

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NEWS

New JefCoEd board member sworn in

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The newest Jefferson County Board of Education member was recently sworn in.

Dean Taylor was sworn in Tuesday, Nov. 11.

Taylor replaces Tommy Little, who chose not to



photo courtesy of Jefferson County Schools

Dean Taylor with his first-grade son Bronson

run for his seat again. Taylor had no competition for the seat.

Little was a member of the school board since 2002.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

ROBBERY continued from page 1

The juvenile's name wasn't released, though he will be charged as an adult, Bridges said.

Bridges said that on the night of Saturday, Nov. 15, two black males entered Radio Shack, one wearing a white mask and brandish-

ing a handgun. The other male was unmasked and unarmed.

An off-duty Birmingham police officer attempted to arrest the two, but both ran, Bridges said.

One was caught near Momma Goldberg's and

the other got away, Bridges said. The suspect who got away has not yet been located.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

Center Point man charged in Walgreens robbery

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

A Center Point man is in Jefferson County Jail after allegedly robbing a person in the parking lot of Walgreens in the 2300 block of Center Point Road.

At about 8 p.m. Sunday, deputies responded to a robbery call, where a 40-year-old male victim reported that he'd been at the Redbox outside Walgreens when a white male approached him, pointed a gun at him and demanded his wallet.

After he gave him the wallet the suspect ran to a gold pickup truck and



photo courtesy of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

drove away, according to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. The victim was able to get a good description of the vehicle, which was broadcast to other deputies in the area. A short time later the suspect vehicle

was spotted on Chalkville Mountain Road by a patrol deputy.

A traffic stop was conducted. The victim's wallet, identified by a Superman logo, was found in the truck along with a toy handgun. The driver was taken back to the store where he was positively identified.

Robert Cameron Hubbard, 30, of Center Point was arrested and charged with first-degree robbery. He remains in jail with bond set at \$30,000.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

Charges announced against man who robbed Center Point, Pinson CVS stores

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Charges have been announced against the man arrested for the alleged robberies of CVS Pharmacy stores in Center Point and Pinson.

Tommy Leon Stewart, 28, of Birmingham is charged with five counts of pharmacy robbery and four counts of menacing. Arrest warrants were issued for Stewart on Nov. 4. He was arrested last Wednesday by Birmingham police and has no bond.

Stewart is also suspected of committing at least four robberies of businesses in the Birmingham city limits, including a doughnut shop, a CVS Pharmacy and two check cashing businesses.

On Oct. 21 just after 1 p.m. the CVS Pharmacy located in the 2000 block



photo courtesy of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

Tommy Leon Stewart

of Center Point Road was robbed by a man with a handgun. After the suspect gathered money and drugs from the store, he jumped out the drive-thru window. Deputies searched the area but were unable to locate him. He was described as a black male with a fake beard and mustache taped to his face.

On Oct. 29 just after 7

p.m. the CVS Pharmacy located in the 6600 block of Center Point Road in Pinson was robbed. The suspect was described in similar fashion. He also used a handgun and fled the store by jumping out the drive-thru window.

As he fled the second robbery location he dropped his wallet, which contained his identification. Detectives were able to use the identification to match him to a fingerprint that was recovered from the earlier Center Point robbery scene.

In each of the robberies there were multiple victims. There were three victims at the Pinson location and two at the Center Point location.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

TCNP continued from page 1

volunteers were on site Friday to help re-plant the banks with native plants. Yeager called them "incredible professionals."

Yeager said non-native species such as English ivy, privet and wisteria have shallow roots and when a flood comes through, the soil is washed away. The area was re-vegetated with native plants, plants that should be there naturally to hold the bank and soil in place.

"It's got a multi-pronged impact," Yeager said of the

project. "It's got a cultural impact, protecting the bridge. It also decreases further erosion in the future and it also increases the viability of the vermilion darter and hopefully helps protect the populations that are downstream of here."

Yeager said a project that accounts for about \$25,000 now would increase to more than \$100,000 in the future had it not been taken care of.

"This is not a massive problem yet, but it will be in the future," Yeager said.

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Scan this QR code with your smartphone to watch an interview with Turkey Creek Nature Preserve Manager Charles Yeager.



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Trussville PD to ‘saturate’ shopping center areas to curb holiday crime

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The Trussville Police Department will be providing additional officers over the next few months to help curb crime during the holiday season.

Capt. Jeff Bridges said the department provides additional officers -- working their days off -- to “saturate our shopping center areas.”

Crime has seemed to increase in the area in recent weeks. On Oct. 4,

the Wendy’s/BP on U.S. Highway 11 in Trussville was robbed at gunpoint. The Dollar General on Deerfoot Parkway in Clay was robbed at gunpoint Oct. 23, as was the Wendy’s on North Chalkville Road in Trussville Oct. 26.

The Arby’s on North Chalkville Road in Trussville was robbed at gunpoint Nov. 10. The next day, Elite Cleaners in Clay was robbed at gunpoint.

“Citizens should be mindful of their surroundings as well as their belongings,”

Bridges said. “Keeping doors locked, don’t leave Christmas presents, purses, laptops or anything of value in plain view. Citizens should not be afraid to report suspicious people or activity to the police.”

Officials from the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office didn’t respond to an email seeking comment for this story.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

Hewitt-Trussville senior named Miss Alabama Teen USA

by Scott Buttram

Publisher

Taylor Elliott of Trussville took top honors in the Miss Alabama Teen USA pageant held in Montgomery on Saturday.

Elliott, a senior at Hewitt-Trussville High School, advanced to the state competition after being named Miss Teen Trussville.

She will represent Alabama in the Miss Teen USA pageant in the Bahamas in the summer of 2015.

She had been first runner-up in last year’s competition.



submitted photo

Taylor Elliott

PITT continued from page 1

was probable cause to send the case for a grand jury to review, Pitt’s cousin, Bailey Little, testified that Pitt was trying to show he was a “good guy,” not a law enforcement officer, when he presented a Jefferson County honorary sheriff’s badge to two Grayson Valley residents June 15.

On June 15, Pitt and Little were confronted in a wooded area near Falling Creek Lane in Grayson Valley by two residents, Brandon Vessels and Brad Lunsford, who had found what they believed to be a rifle about 50 feet into the wooded area near their town homes.

Pitt and Little left on a four-wheeler with the rifle after Pitt showed his honorary badge and told

Vessels and Lunsford to contact Randy Schlitz with the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office.

Little testified that Pitt only showed the badge after the two men kept questioning them about the rifle. Little said the gun was a BB gun. Little testified that he and Pitt had been hanging out in a vehicle near Vessels’ and Lunsford’s homes for about 30 to 45 minutes, with music playing while the windows were rolled up, before going into the woods to retrieve two four-wheelers that had been left in the woods the night before.

Little said the BB gun had been left in the wooded area because he had killed a snake with it a few days earlier. Little said

that only after Vessels and Lunsford continued questioning them about the gun did Pitt pull out the honorary badge and tell them to call Schlitz. Little said he believed the two men thought he and Pitt “were up to no good.”

Little said that one of the men remembered Pitt getting into trouble the year before on an impersonating a peace officer charge, the charge in Shelby County. Pitt, Little said, told the man not to twist his intentions around, that he was just trying to show his character.

Lunsford testified that he had seen an unfamiliar SUV parked in front of his home, saying the vehicle stayed there nearly two hours with loud music

coming from inside. He said that a man got out of the SUV and went into the woods.

When Vessels and Lunsford, both with handguns, walked into the woods and saw what they believed to be a rifle laying halfway in its case covered by a few leaves, Pitt and Little rode up on a four-wheeler and attempted to explain why they left the gun there, Lunsford said. Lunsford said Pitt was acting “erratic,” speaking loudly, quickly and gesturing in animated ways. After Pitt presented the badge, Pitt and Little left with the gun, Lunsford testified. Lunsford said there was “no clear understanding” of why the gun was there.

Penn had subpoenaed

eight people to testify, including Jefferson County Sheriff Mike Hale and Jefferson County Tax Collector J.T. Smallwood, about how Pitt had been given the honorary badge. The request for Hale and Smallwood to testify was denied.

In closing, prosecutor Patrick Lamb said Little was “biased” toward Pitt. Penn argued that Pitt had every right to go into the woods and retrieve the gun. She said Pitt did nothing to suggest he presented himself as a law enforcement officer.

Pitt was arrested on the charge Aug. 20, 2013, then spent about eight months in Shelby County Jail on the probation revocation from the Shelby County

case. He was released on Palm Sunday earlier this year.

“I think he’s gone back to work with his ministry, and he just wants this over,” Penn said. “Let’s try to get it over with.”

The Basement in July relocated from Trussville to Roebuck. The ministry moved its offices and services from Railroad Street in downtown Trussville to 9094 Rear Parkway East in Roebuck. The ministry had held services and had office space in Trussville for about two years.

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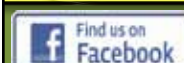
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DRIVING continued from page 1

tal Vision” goggles, which simulated impairment from drugs or alcohol. “It is a sight to behold,”

Hancock said. The state of Alabama ranks in the top five in the number of teen drivers and



photo by Ron Burkett

Clay-Chalkville High School students learn about where they'll end up if they drive distracted or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.



photo by Ron Burkett

A student crashes into an orange cone on the go-kart track at the Trussville Play Station last week.

teen passengers killed in motor vehicle crashes. By presenting the information in an interactive, entertaining and creative fashion, the goal was for the students to be encour-

aged to share the safety messages they learned with the classmates, families and friends throughout their communities. Clay-Chalkville High School sophomore Chad

Murdock said the experience was fun and informative. “I learned that there are many distractions that happen while you’re in the car, like phone, radio and other passengers. I also learned how dangerous it is to drive while intoxicated and how you could be the person that affects another person’s life. There is always time to answer a text or call somebody back once you reach your destination. Overall it was really fun.”

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.



photo by Ron Burkett

Students try to walk in a straight line while wearing “Fatal Vision” goggles.

Trussville City Schools names Teachers of Year

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Trussville City Schools has named its two Teachers of the Year.

At the Trussville City Board of Education meeting Monday, Paine Intermediate School music teacher Chris Byars and Hewitt-Trussville Middle School sixth grade math teacher Suzanne Glasgow were announced as the winners.

Byars will move on to compete for the Alabama Elementary Teacher of the Year award and Glasgow will move on to compete for the Alabama Secondary Teacher of the Year award. Hewitt-Trussville



photo courtesy of Trussville City Schools

Chris Byars, left, and Suzanne Glasgow

High School exceptional education teacher Carrie Jones finished as a finalist for the 2014-2015 Alabama Teacher of the Year award earlier this year. Ann Marie Corgill, a fourth grade teacher at Cherokee Bend Elementary School in Mountain Brook, won the award. She taught English for three years at Hewitt-Trussville Middle

School prior to 2012. The selection process for Alabama’s Teacher of the Year begins at the school system level. Each school system can nominate an elementary and secondary teacher at the district level. One elementary teacher and one secondary teacher are selected from each of the eight state board of education districts. A state selection committee selects four teachers from the 16 district finalists to be interviewed for the titles Alabama Teacher of the Year and Alternate State Teacher of the Year.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

Trussville City Council moves 2 meetings due to holidays

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The city of Trussville announced last week that two Trussville City Council meetings will be rescheduled due to upcoming holidays.

The meeting originally scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 25 will now be Thursday, Nov. 20 at 6 p.m. at Trussville City Hall.

The meeting originally scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 23 will now be Thursday, Dec. 18 at 6 p.m. at Trussville City Hall.

The city council typically meets the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

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LIFESTYLE

In season of thanksgiving, even fallen tree can be something to be thankful for

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But when that same oak monstrosity lies sprawled across your driveway, well, that's a different story...

A few minutes after 6 a.m. this past Monday, Jimmie had just left for work—or so I thought—and I had hunkered back down under the covers, fully intending to catch another hour or two of sleep. When I heard him tromping back up the basement steps,

I figured he'd forgotten something. Instead he had a bit of news to share.

"There's a tree on my truck," he announced, sounding amazingly calm. I thought, considering his prized pickup had possibly been smashed to smithereens sometime during the night.

Thus in my half-conscious state, I wasn't sure I'd heard him right.

"Do what?" I asked in disbelief.

"A tree," he repeated slowly, "on my truck."

It finally sank in. A slow, steady rain beginning midday Sunday and continuing through the night had helped topple a tree we'd only recently talked about chopping



June Mathews
Somewhere in the Middle...

down. How convenient was that?

So while Jimmie looked for the insurance company's phone number, I got dressed and stepped outside onto the porch to survey the damage. Turns out it wasn't so bad. One of the first things I noticed was part of the

privacy fence I've been begging Jimmie to take down for years had been demolished, so that was actually a good thing.

And despite its overly festive autumn-like appearance, the truck, we quickly determined, was only slightly damaged, sustaining a shallow, dinner plate-size dent on the hood and a few scratches. Jimmie was easily able to push some limbs aside and back the truck away from its leafy shelter.

Our immediate concern was clearing a substantial part of the tree off our next-door neighbor Mike's driveway so he could get his car out of his garage and go to work. So with the

guys wielding chainsaws, I grabbed a rake and set to work cleaning up the smaller branches and leaves.

Now I have to say, I don't care for raking on a sunny, crisp afternoon, much less on a cold, damp morning. But I figured since it was our tree that had made the mess, I was obligated to help. So I gamely hauled tree parts to the street, soon growing breathless with all the early morning exertion and as damp as my surroundings.

Driveway cleared, I retreated indoors and left the rest to the Jimmie and Mike. Though plenty of tree debris remains, it'll keep until the weekend.

In the meantime, I'm

counting the fallen tree among our blessings this Thanksgiving season. After all, it did little damage to Jimmie's truck, helped rid us some fencing that needed to go anyway and even saved us the trouble of doing away with the tree itself. Best of all, we won't even have to file an insurance claim.

Things could have been so much worse, but fortunately they weren't. And sometimes it's worth remembering to be thankful for things we don't have or that didn't happen because there are blessings in those things, too.

Email June Mathews at jmathews120@charter.net.

TASTE set for Thursday at Trussville Civic Center

From staff reports

The Trussville Area Chamber of Commerce will present the sixth annual Trussville Art Show and Tasting Event on Thursday, Nov. 20 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Trussville Civic Center.

TASTE features food samples from area restaurants and bakeries, a live art show with art available for purchase, live entertainment, and a cash bar.

In February 2000, Vann Burchfield set a new Guinness world record for circular breathing, holding one continuous note for 47 minutes and six seconds, surpassing Kenny G's record of 45 minutes, 47 seconds. In August 2001, Burchfield won first place at GMA's seminar in the Rockies at Estes Park, Colo., for the national Solo Instrumental Artist competition. Burchfield has also had the honor of performing at the White House on



photo by Ron Burkett

A scene from last year's event

four separate occasions during the Annual Holiday Open House during the Christmas season.

Burchfield will perform live at this year's TASTE.

This year's event will also feature live art by

potter Tena Payne of Earthborn Studios. Payne shapes clay into unique and functional pottery products that are used by chefs and restaurants nationwide, including Hot and Hot Fish Club in Birmingham.

A portion of the proceeds will help to fund the chamber's scholarship fund. The chamber now funds two \$1,000 renewable scholarships for up to four years for area high school and home-schooled seniors.

Advance tickets for TASTE are \$25 and are available at the chamber office at 225 Parkway Drive in Trussville and at other Trussville locations. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door for \$35. The first 350 who purchase tickets will receive a souvenir wine glass.

For a list of confirmed participants to date or for more information, visit www.trussvillechamber.com or call 205-655-7535.



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Clay Elementary donates food to Clay UMC

From staff reports

Clay Elementary School has donated items collected during its food drive to Clay United Methodist Church.

Earlier this month, the school held its annual food drive for a week.

Fourth-grade teachers Andrea Butterfield and Daphnea Doaty were in charge of the drive.



submitted photo

From left are Andrea Butterfield, fourth-grader Callen Matthews, Daphnea Doaty, fourth-grader Norah Blalock and fourth-grader Hannah Gibson.

Grayson Valley private school among 20 best in Alabama

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

A website recently created a "Best Private High Schools" ranking system, and one from the area is among the 20 best in Alabama.

Mountain View Baptist School on Chalkville Mountain Road in Grayson Valley was ranked No. 18 by Niche.com, a website that seeks to "make choosing a neighborhood, college, or K-12 school a more transparent process" by "providing reviews and insight from everyday experts."

The school earned a "B" grade from the website.

Indian Springs School in Indian Springs Village took the top spot. Parkway Christian Academy in

Birmingham came in at No. 17, though it's no longer operating.

The rankings provide a comprehensive assessment of the overall experience at private high schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Niche.com uses data sourced from various government and public data sets, Niche's

own proprietary data, and 123,218 opinion-based survey responses across a variety of topics from 16,688 current students, recent alumni, and parents.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.



file photo by Ron Burkett

Mountain View Baptist School students honor firefighters at a 9/11 memorial service at Center Point Fire Station One earlier this year.

'We will beat the disease,' medical officer tells Trussville Rotary of Ebola

From staff reports

Rotarians with the Trussville Rotary Daybreak Club heard a presentation on Ebola from a local expert last week.

Frank Malensek, chief medical officer at St. Vincent's East since July 2012, presented facts about the disease. The first Ebola virus, he said, was recognized in 1966.

This latest outbreak of the disease, he said, has been worse than previous ones and is facilitated



photo by Diane Poole

Frank Malensek, left, with Rotarian Danny Cooner

by poor hygiene. Casual contact doesn't promote the disease, he said. Typical exposure is usually between five and 10 days but up to 21 days.

It takes about 10 years and about \$1 billion to

develop a vaccine.

"We will beat the disease without a vaccine," he said.

Malensek believes the alarm is unfounded. He feels the United States is safe based on precautions of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. All infectious disease personnel have met with the CDC and the process for treating has been reviewed. Emergency medical services know how to treat the disease, and area emergency rooms are prepared to treat it.

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