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'Phenomenal' effort again complete

Gov. Baker, Lt. Gov. Polito tour DCU Center COVID field hospital

By Brian Lee  
Worcester Telegram & Gazette  
USA TODAY NETWORK

WORCESTER – Amid a second surge of COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts, Gov. Charlie Baker and Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito on Thursday toured the field hospital at the DCU Center, a setup that will have more capacity than the one prepared for patients in the spring. During the brief tour, Baker and Polito stopped at a few sections of

the hospital to speak with workers. The latest hospital, to be run by UMass Memorial Health Care, opens Sunday. It is expected to have a capacity of 220 patients, officials said Thursday. In addressing reporters, Polito described the setup as “phenomenal” in that it will provide oxygen therapy, IV therapy, administered inhalers, nebulizer treatments, among other services needed to help patients get well. It will also have onsite advanced life support, critical care transfer capabilities by Worcester EMS and UMass Life Flight. The logistical effort to build

it required roughly 200 people, including staff of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the DCU Center, and approximately 80 contractors to run electrical and data lines, plumbing, and other labor needs, according to Baker. UMass Memorial Health Care President Dr. Eric Dickson said it will need to hire people as more patients are admitted. He put a specific call out for nurses, doctors, respiratory therapists, physical therapists and social workers. “We need your help,” Dickson said. “We would love to have you

See HOSPITAL, A11



Gov. Charlie Baker tours the field hospital being built inside the DCU Center on Thursday. [T&G STAFF/RICK CINCLAIR]

OLD FEZZI WIG APPROVED



Tim Kenny and his wife, Debbie, decorate their Main Street home with “A Christmas Carol” theme every holiday season, hoping to inspire “charity, kindness, love and celebration.” [T&G STAFF/CHRISTINE PETERSON]

Lancaster couple decorates home in nod to Dickens classic 'A Christmas Carol'

By Ann Connery Frantz  
Special to Worcester Telegram & Gazette  
USA TODAY NETWORK

“It was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well.” The closing words of “A Christmas Carol” reassure all that the Christmas spirit remains in Charles Dickens’ reformed Scrooge for the rest of his life. They’re equally applicable to the Main Street, Lancaster, home of Tim and Debbie Kenny, which they’ve infused with the spirit of Dickens’ 1843 novel. Built in 1889, the original Forbush house became the Browns’ and, in 1972, the Kenny family’s. While it appears small from the street, the house contains multiple spaces inside, thanks to redesigns and additions. To enter is to leave behind the business of everyday living, suspending the present for a visit to

childhood joy. The house showcases a collection of holiday passion borne from Tim’s passion for Christmas and Dickens. “The story’s vivid images of family and friends gathering to celebrate the holiday, no matter their circumstances, were an inspiration, as were the themes of charity, kindness, love and celebration,” he said. “Decorating our home with all the different trees and opening it to friends and local seniors was a natural way to bring Dickens’ ideals to life.”

For years, the Kennys have carried off this labor of love, decorating 30 trees and the nooks and crannies inside their Victorian-style home. Each tree is different. In most years, their friends help, decorating the trees the day after Thanksgiving; the trees stand decorated for two to three months before being returned to storage — each theme’s ornaments kept in neatly labeled plastic bins in the basement. (There are Independence Day-, Easter- and

See CAROL, A11

‘Mind boggling’ numbers continue to rise in city

Worcester may be high on list for vaccines

By Kim Ring  
Worcester Telegram & Gazette

USA TODAY NETWORK

WORCESTER — Because scientists here helped develop one of the COVID-19 vaccines, Worcester may be higher on the list for receiving the vaccine once it becomes available. “It seems like we’ve been prioritized pretty highly because of our work with the governor and the DCU Center,” the city’s medical director, Dr. Michael P. Hirsh said Thursday. “I think also because we have helped develop at least the Pfizer version of the vaccine I think we will get an aliquot of this sent in.” That would be good news for weary health care workers who are, in growing numbers, testing positive for the novel coronavirus. City officials said it will be another week or two before the expected steep rise in cases brought on by Thanksgiving travel begins to show up in the city’s COVID-19 statistics. But already, City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr. said, the numbers are “mind boggling.” “As of today, we have 10,127 confirmed positive

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# CAROL

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Halloween-themed ornaments too, but Christmas is the biggie.)

Some steps are changed for 2020. In the past, a big Thanksgiving dinner preceded the decorating, with nearly three dozen friends coming in to help. An open house for neighbors, acquaintances and senior citizens followed. This year, there’s a new approach.

“We are planning to decorate the house in its full holiday splendor,” Tim said. “Keeping up traditions and bringing the light and beauty of Christmas into our home seems more important this year than ever as we close out 2020 and welcome in what will helpfully be a better year.

“We’ll need to do more of the decorating ourselves and modify some of our traditions to adapt to coronavirus restrictions. Rather than our large tree-decorating event after Thanksgiving, we’ll have some small, intimate gatherings with just a few socially distanced friends or family to focus on trimming one or two trees at a time,” he said.

“For the first time in 25 years we won’t be having our large annual holiday open house. Instead, we’ll celebrate with small, focused get-togethers, many on Zoom, to share the trees and holiday cheer with as many people as we can.”

While so many trees may seem a riot of excess, it does not appear that way once one enters. Handy with a hammer, Tim has added on rooms and designed space to accommodate both living and gazing. He’s quietly energetic, enthusiastically describing the collection as we speak. He guides visitors from one room to the next, pointing out his favorites and patiently answering their questions. From the smallest item to the grand plan, he willingly discusses the holiday house.

Thematically decorated trees highlight all of Victorian-style rooms.

“People who haven’t visited sometimes think it’s over the top or gauche, but when they come, they realize it’s cozy and comfortable; they’re not tripping over things.”

Their predominantly Victorian decor, with beautifully upholstered or print-covered furniture, increases its warm appeal. Each treetop reaches the ceiling, but the tree itself may sit on a piece of furniture, halfway up the wall. There are two to three in each room, perched on tables, an antique music

cabinet or the floor.

**“The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there.”**

*"A Christmas Carol"*

Tim’s favorite is the family’s original Victorian tree in the front parlor by the fireplace. “It is the first tree that guests see after being invited in through the front foyer, and the one around which our close friends gather to exchange presents after the annual holiday open house,” he said.

Standing 9 feet high, its abundant branches are lovingly decked with over a thousand period ornaments and topped with a porcelain angel in a flowing red papier-mâché gown. The tree sparkles with vintage blown-glass ornaments, crocheted snowflakes and glittery Victorian holiday images of Saint Nicholas, boys dashing down hills on sleds and girls sporting fur muffs to warm their hands. The final touches are gold Victorian icicles hung on the branches one by one, white dipped candles draped in pairs everywhere you look, and a spirited holiday train circling beneath. The tree stands adjacent to a Bavarian pipe organ, with pedals and bellows. The effect is captivating and viewing it one understands why more than a single visit to the house is tempting.

Debbie’s favorite is their “family tree,” added to the house during the year of the couple’s Christmas wedding. It’s filled with hundreds of colored lights and strung with red and gold beads. “The 9-foot-high family tree is a holiday companion in the great room, where we spend most of our time,” she said. “It is a place for all the special ornaments passed on from childhood, given by friends, or commemorating life’s special milestones.”

The family tree has no rules; each ornament has a special meaning for the Kennys or evokes memories of Christmases past. “There’s a glass-blown vintage white Rolls Royce like the one we used on our wedding day, little gingerbread spice ornaments handmade by a friend, souvenir ornaments from vacation trips, and many more happy memories.”

There’s a collection of Santa dolls around the family room and, for added atmosphere, a wide-screen TV can be transformed into a crackling fireplace. There’s even a “tree” tree decorated with Christmas tree ornaments. Near the ceiling is a Victorian picture rail running across several walls, which Tim built to display family photographs.

In the large Tudor-themed dining room added in recent years, a 12 Days of Christmas tree glows brightly in the bay window; the room features a 14-seat dining table and a full-sized suit of armor. Tree ornaments include drummers drumming, lords a leaping, ladies dancing, and all the traditional gifts from the song, right down to the partridge topping the tree. The tree is garlanded by a chain of golden rings and lit with traditional candles, electric for safety, but still dazzling on a dark winter day.

A Belgian country cupboard dominates one wall, part of an intimate assemblage in a room adequately sized for a small restaurant. A life-sized nutcracker stands at the far end of the room, and on a nearby hearth, the cricket of Dickens’ fiction perches near a copy of the book itself. (“The Cricket and the Hearth” was one of his early Christmas books, his second,” Kenny said.)

His office is dedicated to Dickens memorabilia, in addition to the requisite Dickens tree. A collection of 1,067 copies of “A Christmas Carol,” including one in Braille, lines one wall; a collection of Dickens-era miniature houses, a themed tree and even a period tall hat, which he sometimes wears to presentations, almost crowd the small room.

In love with Dickens’ classic, Tim began to collect books decades ago. As he traveled for work in his early career, he looked into old bookstores and found what he sought. He has them all in a database dating back to 1843. The first edition of “A Christmas Story” — about 6,000 books — sold out within a week that year, he said. Dominating the desk wall is a large wreath, made from actual pages of Dickens’ story, curled around Marley’s doorknob face — a 2018 gift from his parents and made locally. There’s not much one can give the Kennys now, Tim said; they have acquired a lot during their 25-year marriage.

The Kennys’ cozy blue kitchen contains a Hanukkah tree. Sleds used in the family for three generations are mounted on the walls, along with snowshoes from years past, now decorated with small ornaments. “Everything gets repurposed,” he said.

On the sunporch is a bird tree, decorated with bright red cardinals and other wild birds. Circling the room from an upper shelf are bird houses. There’s a nautical theme inside the entry foyer.

The collection grew to 30 trees after the Clinton Item ran a piece that claimed the couple had 30 trees. To make it so, they ran out



**This year, the Kennys’ Main Street home will host smaller gatherings because of coronavirus guidelines. For the first time in 25 years, the annual holiday open house will not be held.** [T&G STAFF/CHRISTINE PETERSON]

and got more. “It’s a little craziness,” he agreed.

Sound and motion filter through the rooms. A CD player creates the effect of crackling wood in more than one fireplace, the light shown on a monitor fitted inside a fireplace frame. There are no real fireplaces, but Tim created several in cleverly designed wood frames around computer and TV screens.

Many more decorated themes appear here and there: children’s toys; sports memorabilia, a gift tree with ornaments the Kennys give to visitors and friends; a Sherlock Holmes tree with 53 ornaments, each from a different Holmes story; a “Star Wars”-themed tree and another for sports fans with Patriots nesting dolls. The Super Bowl is well represented upstairs in “Mantown,” with its bar, pool table and comfortable seating ... a solar aluminum tree up there has aluminum wheel ornaments and there’s a tree with “characters from all the shows we watched as kids,” Tim said. The nearby Vegas tree is fairly predictable: it has gambling ornaments.

In the garage, Tim even assembled a tree to brighten his wife’s return from work, decorating it with miniature jumper cables, WD 40 cans and lights.

No space is overlooked, nor any theme neglected. In a hidden nook downstairs dwells Krampus, the half-goat, half-demon of Norse mythology. It’s an eerie space, yet still intriguing.

**(Of Fezziwig) “He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil.”**

*"A Christmas Carol"*

Eternally creative, with supportive energy, Tim has incorporated his imagination into his work, even been designated “vice president of culture” at one company. There, he says, he applied elements of “A Christmas Carol” to his work. “I’m Fezziwig,” he said: “he has the power to make work a toil or a pleasure.” At work, he studied different employee groups and how they might work best together. “And I watched out for landmines, getting in front of them to course-correct.” Though retired, he still consults, creating innovative ways to discard dated ideas of setup and work structure.

The couple has deep local roots. Tim is a graduate of Nashoba schools, Fitchburg State and the UMass system. His wife graduated from schools at Acton, Holyoke and Northeastern. At home, they love visitors. “I was raised to have parties,” Tim says, a spark of glitter on his cheek. “My mother enjoyed social events and as the house increased in size, more people were invited.”

Coronavirus, for the time being, interrupts that pattern. But only temporarily. The show will still go on, he says.

“You could do worse things with our time than making people happy.”

# COVID

From Page A1

cases since the beginning of the pandemic,” Augustus said during the city’s weekly COVID-19 update outside City Hall. “This, since we last met ... eight days ago, (is) and additional 1,012 cases; in the last eight days. That, if you think about it, is a phenomenal number.”

Since the spring, the highest weekly count topped off at 600, he said, adding that more than 1,000 in a week is very concerning.

Mayor Joseph M. Petty said announced that the city is holding a contest for residents who want to design masks. The winning designs will be printed on as many as 2,000 masks and distributed around the city, he said, adding that there will be cash prizes and gift certificates for the winners in categories for 18 years old and older and those under 18.

More information will be available on the city’s website.

Officials said they’ve spent months trying to convince residents to take precautions to protect themselves and others from the virus, and while many people comply with their requests, some



**Worcester surpassed 10,000 COVID-19 positive residents, City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr. announced Thursday.** [T&G STAFF/ASHLEY GREEN]

still do not.

Augustus said if folks are not willing to wear masks to protect their friends and family, they should consider doing so to show respect for health care workers. He said in the spring, when New England was one of just a few areas in the country where the virus was rampant, health care workers from other parts of the country came here to help.

But now, Hirsh said, 49 states are surging so health care workers

are being denied vacation time and are working extended hours as their coworkers fall ill or must quarantine because of positive COVID-19 tests.

Augustus said the next few months won’t be like those at the start of the pandemic when personal protective gear and ventilators were in short supply.

This time, he said, the shortages will be of people available to take care of those who are sickened and hospitalized with the virus.

# HOSPITAL

From Page A1

here.”

Meanwhile, Baker said a second field hospital will be established in Lowell, to be overseen by Lowell General Hospital.

Field hospitals are in need because of a surge of coronavirus cases since Labor Day.

Including all hospital patients, 73% of the 11,000 non-ICU beds in Massachusetts hospitals were occupied and 56% of the 1,800 ICU beds were full as of Tuesday, according to the state Department of Public Health.

In Central Massachusetts, 75% of the 1,200 non-ICU beds are occupied, and 67% of its ICU beds are full, both higher than the statewide average.

On Wednesday, the Department of Public Health reported 4,613 new COVID-19 cases, which, Baker said, is “a very significant number of new cases.”

In total, more than 8.5 million tests have been conducted in Massachusetts, whose seven day positive test rate is 4.9%.

“As the folks at UMass Memorial here in Worcester know, we’ve seen a continued increase in hospitalizations, slow and steady, since Labor Day, both here in Massachusetts and around the country,” Baker said.

Statewide, just over 1250 people are hospitalized with 264 people in the ICU. The new case growth is driving a rise in hospitalizations, but on average, hospitalizations have been growing at about 2% to 3%, per

day for the past couple of weeks, Baker said.

Baker pointed to recent news about vaccines as reason for optimism.

“The Commonwealth, like many other states, is preparing a distribution effort with respect to vaccines,” Baker said. “So we’re ready to work with our partners to distribute them at the appropriate time.”

But that progress does not mean the state can “flip the switch” and return to normal, he added.

“People need to stay vigilant and they need to keep doing the things that we know keep the virus in check,” Baker said. “Wearing face coverings. Avoiding groups. Keeping our distance. Staying for the most part with people you live with.”

State Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders thanked UMass Memorial and Dickson for once again answering the call.

Sudders said that last spring, when the state needed to establish its first run of field hospitals, and she called various CEOs, Dickson was without hesitation.

Dickson, in a message to caregivers locally and throughout the state, said he was sorry that they were again being asked to go above and beyond the call of duty.

“But you know the community and state needs you once again,” he said. “We’re going to get through this. We have vaccines, likely to start in the next couple of weeks. And we’re going to emerge from this, I believe, stronger than we were in the past for having gone through this together.”

## DILBERT

