



The Daily News Journal



The Rutherford County Sheriff's Office Strategies and Tactics for Opioid Prevention Unit aims to help prevent and treat drug addiction. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

STOP program aims to treat drug addiction

Nancy DeGennaro

Murfreesboro Daily News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

After Chris Hale of Rockvale found his best friend dead Oct. 11 from an overdose, he knew it was time to get his life on track to keep from suffering the same fate.

A new program from the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office aims to help people just like Hale.

Patrol Lt. Will Holton, who coordinated Sheriff Mike Fitzhugh's new Sheriff's new Strategies and Tactics for Opioid Prevention Unit, talked with the 26-year-old drug user.



Hale, who had used drugs for eight years, agreed to try rehabilitation.

Care coordinator Erica Phemister of the Tennessee Save of Life First Responders' grant arranged for Hale to enter Mirror Lake Recovery Center, a drug rehabilitation facility in Burns, Tennessee, where he spent 36 days.

His trip to rehab wasn't his first attempt to put down the drugs.

Hale previously stopped using drugs but started again when his stepfather died.

"Once I got clean this time, all emotions I kept away and feelings showed back up," Hale said. "Thank God I was in rehab at the time because there's no telling what I would have done."

Hale's friend was one of 26 people who died from drug overdoses and 113 people who overdosed but survived in Rutherford County outside

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Many people line up on Monday to receive the COVID-19 vaccine from nurses at the former State Farm building in Murfreesboro. HELEN COMER/THE DAILY NEWS JOURNAL

Facility opens for COVID-19 vaccinations

Nancy DeGennaro

Murfreesboro Daily News Journal
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Hundreds lined up on a recent morning to get the COVID-19 vaccination at Rutherford County Health Department's newly opened location at the shuttered State Farm Operations Center in Murfreesboro.

"I'm excited that residents here in Rutherford County are receptive to receiving the vaccine," said LaShan Dixon, assistant director of the Rutherford County Health Department.

Currently, the two-dose Moderna vaccine is being given to those who fall into the 1a1 and 1a2 rollout categories, which includes law enforcement and first responders as well as people ages 75 and older. Once recipients have the first dose of the vaccination, they are required to get the booster within 28 days.

Those who have tested positive for the coronavirus are required to wait at least 90 days before receiving the Moderna vaccine and at least 14 days after any other vaccinations, Dixon said.

In late December, state health

What to know about vaccines, testing

Vaccinations and COVID-19 testing will be administered from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at the State Farm Operations Center, 2500 Memorial Blvd., Murfreesboro.

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays will be self-testing only for ages 18 and older. Drive-thru testing will be offered Tuesdays and Thursdays for all ages.

Vaccinations are in limited quantities, so recipients are required to register online first at the county health department website, health.rutherfordcountyttn.gov.

Appointments are dependent on the number of vaccine doses provided to the health department. Information will be disseminated to the public as information becomes available.

For updated information, visit the RCHD's website and follow the Rutherford County government's Twitter and Facebook pages. The Tennessee Department of Health also has more detailed information regarding the vaccination process.

officials were told to expect 50,000 doses of Pfizer vaccine and 40,000 doses of Moderna vaccine per week.

All slots scheduled through Feb. 26 have been filled, but a priority signup list is available.

"We plan to have more slots available for vaccines. Currently do not have them listed right now due to the amount of vaccines we have now on hand," Dixon said.

"We do expect more (vaccine doses) to arrive this week."

Check signupgenius.com/go/rutherford_county_covid_vaccination to sign up when those vaccines do arise.

COVID-19 testing also will be held at the State Farm campus and can be accessed from the DeJarnette Lane entrance.

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Murfreesboro teens among first female Eagle Scouts

Nancy DeGennaro

Murfreesboro Daily News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

Four Murfreesboro teens made scouting history again as members of the inaugural class of female Eagle Scouts.

Lindsay Parker, Morgan Phillips, Taylor Bell and Kenzie Neal earned the rank less than two years after joining BSA Troop 2019, the first all-female troop in Rutherford and Cannon counties.

"I still can't believe this is happening. Even just three years ago I wouldn't have thought I would be able to do this," Lindsay Parker said.

The foursome became part of history on Feb. 1, 2019, as charter members of Troop 2019. At the same, thousands just like them celebrated with ceremonies to mark the Boy Scouts of America's inclusion of girls in the Boy Scouts program.

"I'm just glad I could be a part of this group and make an impact on history," Taylor Bell said.

Although they have passed boards and garnered their Eagle ranks, an official Court of Honor ceremony will not take place until February 2021, in hopes of having a larger celebration instead of a scaled-back COVID-19 version.



The inaugural Eagle Scout class for BSA Troop 2019, the first all-female BSA troop, are, from left, Taylor Bell, Morgan Phillips, Kenzie Neal and Lindsay Parker. SUBMITTED

"In many ways, these young women got more than they bargained for when they signed up," said Kevin Phillips, a veteran Scout leader and the troop's

founding scoutmaster. "Each of them realized that they not only had to represent the ideals of Scouting, but they had to do so with great precision. All eyes

were upon them."

Although earning Eagle Scout rank is a long process, the young women worked extra diligently to finish by the end of 2020.

But they didn't just check off necessary requirements for each badge they earned on the way to Eagle rank.

"I have learned so much through the program including life skills, outdoor skills, and leadership skills that I can not only use in Scouting but in my everyday life," said Morgan Phillips, whose father is Troop 2019's scoutmaster.

Troop 2019 Eagle Scouts and their projects

- Lindsay Parker of Murfreesboro, a 19-year-old freshman at the University of Kentucky, coordinated a donation drive for age-appropriate books for children and built bookshelves for preschools.

- Kenzie Neal of Murfreesboro, an 18-year-old freshman at Coastal Carolina University, redesigned a native garden in Murfreesboro's Barfield Crescent Park for her Eagle Scout project.

- Taylor Bell, a 15-year-old freshman

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COVID-19

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The free tests were once administered at the health department on Burton Street, but cars often blocked traffic. So finding a place large enough to accommodate both vaccinations and testing was imperative.

In November, State Farm announced the facility would be permanently closed, although employees have worked from home since March.

“State Farm is allowing us to use this facility at no charge to the county taxpayers,” Rutherford County Mayor Bill Ketron said.

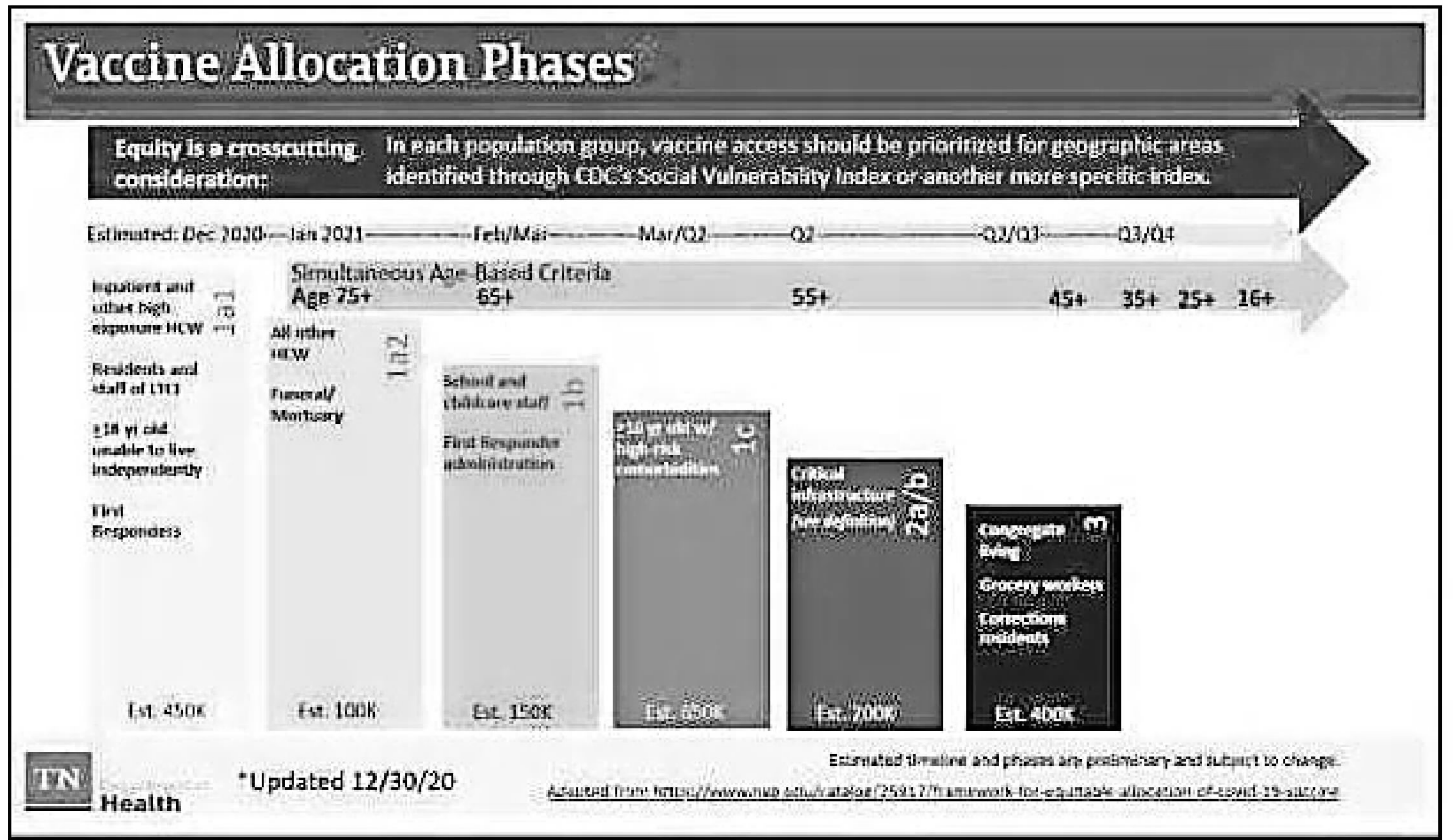
Vaccinations are being administered in the covered car bays once used for automobile estimates.

“It seems to work out perfectly because you can drive through and get your shot and continue on,” said Ketron, who was instrumental in gaining use of the facility. “We thank State Farm because they’ve always been a good neighbor.”

Melissa Wirth, a home health occupational therapist, was in line early to get the vaccine. She was admittedly nervous about having an adverse reaction to the shot, but she felt it was worth the risk.

“I think it’s important for me to get it because I do work with a lot of people who are sick and I do work with a lot of COVID patients, so it’s kind of a good way to assuage any anxieties for me,” Wirth said.

To mitigate any adverse reactions, all



Tennessee vaccination plan. SUBMITTED

vaccine recipients were asked to wait on site for 15 minutes before leaving. Medical personnel were available to handle those situations if needed.

MTSU Health Services nurse Nicole King had COVID-19 in September and said it was “one of the worst things” she’s experienced. So she was adamant about getting the vaccine in the hope she won’t

“ever get it again.”

Christina Benefield, a counselor who works with mental health patients, hopes the vaccinations will help the country get back to some semblance of normalcy.

“We are so close to hopefully ending this pandemic by getting vaccinations. I’m appreciative of all the researchers

and scientists and healthcare workers that have provided this vaccine and worked so hard over the past year,” Benefield said. “I’m really grateful the government gave them all the funding ... so we could have this vaccine.”

Reach reporter Nancy DeGennaro at degennaro@dnj.com and follow her on Twitter @NanDeGennaro.

STOP

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the four cities this year.

The growing number of needless overdose deaths this year alarmed Sheriff’s Lt. Holton, who has investigated drug cases for most of his 20-year career.

“Like every deputy, I am tired of seeing our citizens die from overdoses,” Holton said. “We can’t arrest our way out of the opioid epidemic. It is our goal to transform our opioid-dependent citizens back into healthy members of the community.”

Holton wrote a proposal resulting in a U.S. Department of Justice grant funding deputies on the Strategies and Tactics for Opioid Prevention (STOP) Unit to reduce opioid dependency through education, intervention, prevention and treatment.

The program started in October.

STOP deputies include Cpl. Jim Throneberry and Deputies Evan Sharp, Carol Stafford, Nick Madore and Gary Herron. They partner with Phemister, whose grant is managed through the Prevention Coalition for Success in Rutherford County.

Responsibilities of the STOP deputies include:

- Educating people about the dangers of opioid drugs including heroin, fentanyl, Oxycodone, Oxymorphone and Hydrocodone.
- Assisting opioid-dependent citizens and their families by connecting them with resources to become opioid-free.
- Responding to overdoses by administering emergency treatment, educating the patient and offering treatment options and providing Narcan, a medical spray that can prevent overdoses.
- Assisting the narcotics detectives in arresting opioid dealers who supply the drugs.

For more information, people may call dispatch at 615-898-7770 and ask for the STOP Unit or email stop@rcsotn.org.

The STOP deputies trained with Outreach Coordi-

Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences

- **ACEs are common:** on average **28%** of adults report physical abuse and **21%** report sexual abuse
- **ACEs cluster:** almost **40%** of adults reported 2 or more ACEs, and **12.5%** experienced 4 or more
 - Individuals with 5 or more ACEs are **7 to 10 times** more likely to use illicit drugs
 - Individuals with 6 or more ACEs are **46 times more likely** to be IV drug abusers than those with no ACEs
 - Individuals with 4 or more ACEs are **12 times more likely** to attempt suicide

(CTIPP, 2017) TN

Dat from the Adverse Childhood Experiences scale shows how trauma can increase the chances for drug addiction. SUBMITTED

nator Joshua Crews of the Tennessee Save a Life First Responder program.

“More people die from opioid overdoses than crashes in Tennessee,” Crews said. “There is an addiction problem.”

Crews teaches law enforcement how childhood experiences of trauma increase the chances of substance abuse, how to respond to an opioid overdose and how to prevent death by administering Narcan.

When deputies encounter someone who might need treatment, Phemister finds facilities for drug-dependent people.

“Six individuals from Rutherford County referred by the Sheriff’s Office have graduated from treatment,” Phemister said. “I am able to follow up and get back with the Sheriff’s Office. That is a unique piece that no one else does.”

Holton said the Phemister follows up with the graduates to keep them drug-free.

Before treatment, some people who are drug-de-

pendent will be arrested for possession of illegal drugs or commit property crimes to pay for the drug use, the lieutenant said.

“If you can get them off the substance, you fix two issues: they are no longer dependent on the drug, therefore they don’t have to steal to pay for it,” Holton said.

Hale credited Holton for talking with him about rehabilitation.

“If it wasn’t for him, I never would have thought about treatment,” Hale said.

Hale said Phemister keeps him accountable by making sure he attends meetings.

“She is someone I can call about any problems,” Hale said. “She gets it. I feel like I have a good support system. My goal now is to continue to stay sober and be happy and not depend on substances to keep me sane.”

Reach reporter Nancy DeGennaro at degennaro@dnj.com and follow her on Twitter @NanDeGennaro.

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Scouts

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at Rockvale High School, designed an obstacle course in agility for Rutherford County Sheriff’s K9s.

• Morgan Phillips of Rockvale, a 19-year-old transferring to MTSU this January, led an effort to combat erosion and reroute rainwater at Murfreesboro’s Barfield Crescent Park by putting in plants and mulch to spruce up the area.

All four were already familiar with scouting before joining Troop 2019, so they knew the commitment it would take. Three of them have brothers with Eagle Rank and the other’s brother earned Life Rank.

“Scouting to me is something that I can do and share with my whole family. We’re all involved in scouting in some way, so it’s something we can do together and that makes it extra special,” Lindsay Parker said.

Before Boy Scouts of America admitted female members to its primary Scouting organization, they were allowed in other elements of scouting, such as Venturing and STEM Scouts.

But Eagle Scout rank takes scouting to another level. And through Troop 2019, being able to earn Eagle rank finally became a real possibility.

“It’s a cool thing to have the same opportunity as my twin brother, who is also an Eagle Scout,” Morgan Phillips said. “I am so excited for the future of Troop 2019 and to see these girls grow in their Scout skills.”

Reach reporter Nancy DeGennaro at degennaro@dnj.com and follow her on Twitter @NanDeGennaro.



Taylor Bell, 15 a Scout with Scouts of Boy Scouts of America, has completed her Eagle Scout project, a K-9 agility course for the Sheriff’s office. In addition to the course she also raised money for toys and other goodies for the four-legged deputies. HELEN COMER/DNJ