



The LEADER

CORNING | NEW YORK

WEDNESDAY | DECEMBER 31 | 2008

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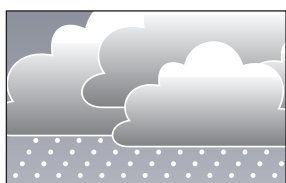
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TODAY'S LOCAL WEATHER



HEAVY SNOW EARLY
WETM 18 Storm Team
seven-day forecast | 8A



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Consumers lose confidence

BY ELLEN SIMON
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK | Consumer confidence hit an all-time low in December, dropping further in the face of rising layoffs, in yet another sign that consumer spending is unlikely to pull the U.S. out of a year-long recession any time soon.

Consumers have been nervous

about spending for months – putting off big-ticket purchases, forgoing new clothes and choosing store brands at the grocery store – all of which may make this the worst holiday season for retailers in decades.

The Consumer Confidence Index, measured by the Conference Board, a private research group, fell to 38 in December from a revised 44.7 in November. That is its lowest point

since the group began compiling the index in 1967, and below the previous low of 38.8 in October. Economists surveyed by Thomson Reuters had expected the index to rise incrementally to 45.

“Deepening job insecurity and falling asset prices are outweighing any optimism consumers may have derived from falling gas prices,” said Dana Saporita, U.S. economist at

investment bank Dresdner Kleinwort.

The unemployment rate hit a 15-year high in November, and economists expect additional job losses in the first half of 2009. Those saying in the Conference Board survey that jobs are “hard to get” rose to 42 percent in December from 37.1 percent in November, when the unemployment rate stood at 6.7 percent.

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END OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON



ERIC WENSEL | THE LEADER

Christmas tree pick-ups will soon begin in several local communities as the holiday season nears an end. Owners are asked to take all ornaments off disposed trees, and set them unbagged near the curb.

Workers to begin tree pick-ups

BY JEFFERY SMITH
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CORNING | Now that the holidays are winding down, it's time for the Christmas trees to go.

Several municipalities pick up Christmas trees at the curbside if certain rules are followed.

For instance, all ornaments must be taken off the tree left unbagged near the curb.

“It's surprising how many (trees) we see each year at the curb

with ornaments,” said Jeff Muller, Bath Village streets supervisor. “No decorations. No tree stands and no bags.”

Collections in the city of Corning, the villages of Bath, Horseheads and South Corning and the towns of Erwin and Big Flats will soon be underway.

Several of the communities collect the old Christmas trees then chip them into mulch.

The collections will begin late this week or in early January and

run throughout the month.

“We'll start picking up Christmas trees Jan. 2, and continue weekdays until all trees are gone,” said Mike Harris, Corning's superintendent of public works. “Trees cannot be placed in a bag.”

In the town of Big Flats, residents who want their trees picked up must place them out front and contact the public works department at 562-8443 Ext. 224.

Snow, wind and cold on the way today

THE LEADER STAFF

BINGHAMTON | Weatherwise, 2008 will not end quietly.

The National Weather Service has issued a winter weather advisory for today, as forecasters are predicting 3-6 inches of snow, followed by strong wind gusts and very cold temperatures.

Snow was expected to begin falling in the early morning hours, with a three- to four-hour period of heavy snow around daybreak today. Two to 4 inches of snow was expected to fall by daybreak.

Light snow is expected to continue into the afternoon before tapering off to scattered snow showers, with total accumulations of 3-6 inches.

Cold, blustery conditions will follow the storm, with northwest winds of 15-20 miles per hour and gusts of up to 35 mph possible, according to the National Weather Service.

New Year's Eve revelers should bundle up, as the temperature at midnight is expected to be 12 degrees with a wind chill of minus 4.

LOCAL NEW YEAR'S EVE EVENTS

171 Cedar

Corning's 171 Cedar Arts Center will host its second annual New Year's Eve Family Celebration from 8 p.m.-midnight.

The celebration caps off 171 Cedar's 40th anniversary year, and since the arts center was established in the late 1960's, the New Year's Eve party will have a “flower power” theme.

The party will include live music by Top Shelf, a four-course dinner catered by the 171 culinary arts faculty, instruction in the dance fads of the '60s, a midnight toast, and prizes for the most imaginative neck wear. There will also be chaperoned art, games, movies, Wii, karaoke, and Dance Dance Revolution for kids.

The cost is \$100 per couple, which includes up to three children. Additional children are \$15 each. 171 Cedar is located in downtown Corning. For more details or to purchase tickets, call 936-4647.

The Radisson Hotel Corning

Located on Denison Parkway in Corning, the hotel is offering a New Year's Eve package that includes overnight accommodations, two tickets to a comedy show at 8:30 p.m., and a DJ and dancing until 1 a.m.



SEE EVENTS | 8A

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

29th District sees changing of the guard

BY BOB RECOTTA
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CORNING | For the first time in more than 20 years, the Southern Tier will be represented by a Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Congressman-elect Eric Massa will become the first Democrat since Stan Lundine left office in 1986 to be elected to national office from the Southern Tier. Massa said his accessibility gave him an edge in his race against U.S. Rep. John R. “Randy” Kuhl Jr., R-Hammondsport.

“We did hundreds of house parties, sitting in people's living rooms, answering

every question in as straight forward a manner as possible,” Massa said.

This was Massa's second campaign against Kuhl. In 2006, Kuhl beat Massa, 106,077-100,044. Massa said he benefited from that loss.

SEE CHANGING | 8A

THE LEADER FILES

Congressman-elect Eric Massa was successful the second time around in unseating U.S. Rep. John R. “Randy” Kuhl Jr., R-Hammondsport, and bringing Democrats control of a district that has been in GOP hands since 1986.

