

Borgata hosts Lady Gaga



Absegami, EHT renew rivalry



THURSDAY
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ATLANTIC COUNTY EDITION

Local hospitals counter state trend of declining staff

■ AtlantiCare, Shore Memorial, Cape Regional and South Jersey Healthcare increased or maintained their employee numbers in 2009. Southern Ocean County Hospital's staffing is down 9 percent.

By **ERIK ORTIZ**
Staff Writer

Many hospitals in the state froze wages, cut staff or put them on furloughs in 2009, according to a survey released Wednesday, but hospitals in southern New Jersey fared better and

AtlantiCare Health System went in the opposite direction.

While other hospitals were downsizing, the operator of AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center was hiring. AtlantiCare Health System currently has 5,023 employees, an increase of

more than 100 from early 2009, according to Richard Lovering, vice president for human resources and organizational development.

Already Atlantic County's largest employer outside of the casinos, AtlantiCare continued to grow last year, providing a different economic picture from the New Jersey Hospital Association survey.

The Princeton-based research and advocacy group said that 43 percent

of the state's hospitals reported laying off workers in 2009, down slightly from 45 percent in 2008's survey. But the number of hospitals instituting hiring freezes increased to about 25 percent in 2009 from 13 percent in 2008. Forty-eight percent of hospitals surveyed eliminated vacant positions, unchanged from the previous year.

As jobs were wiped out, so were some services. The association said nearly one-quarter of hospitals had

to discontinue programs, such as pediatric inpatient services or behavioral health services, up from 17 percent in 2008.

"Unlike other businesses, hospitals can't simply adjust by reducing their output or cutting back on hours," Betsy Ryan, the association's president, said in a statement. "Recession or not, our communities rely on hos-

□ See Hospitals, A5

Haiti toll may reach tens of thousands



Associated Press photo by Ricardo Arduengo

People search for survivors under the rubble of a collapsed building the day after an earthquake hit Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Bodies were everywhere as leaders of the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation struggled to comprehend the extent of the catastrophe.

■ Everywhere one looks in the island nation's capital are bodies, collapsed buildings and the injured from the earthquake.

By **JONATHAN M. KATZ**
Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Dazed survivors wandered past dead bodies in rubble-strewn streets Wednesday, crying for loved ones, and rescuers desperately searched collapsed buildings as fear rose that the death toll from Haiti's devastating earthquake could reach into the tens of thousands.

The first cargo planes with food, water, medical supplies, shelter and sniffer dogs headed to the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation a day after the magnitude-7 quake flattened much of the capital, where 2 million people live.

Tuesday's earthquake brought down buildings great and small — from shacks in shantytowns to President Rene Preval's gleaming white National Palace, where a dome tilted ominously above the

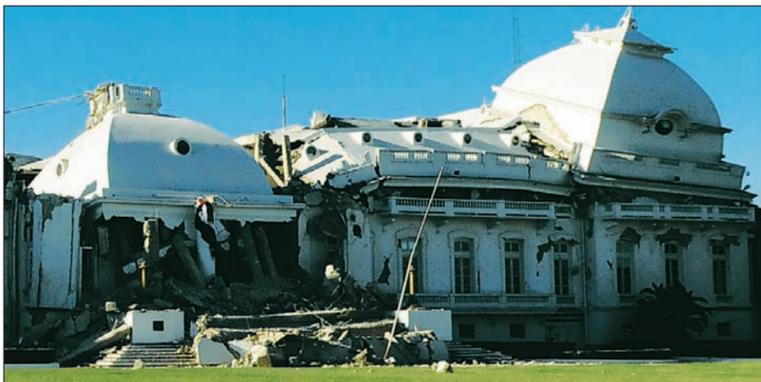
□ See Haiti, A10

A.C. may offer K-9 assistance

Mayor Lorenzo Langford says the city's sidelined police dogs could aid search efforts. **A10**

Haitian village had Cape ties

Area residents wait for word from a village where they helped build homes. **A10**



Associated Press photo by Jorge Cruz

A dome tilts Wednesday atop Haiti's damaged National Palace in Port-au-Prince.

Area relatives can only wait, worry

By **DAN GOOD**
Staff Writer

Mona Momplaisir held the phone to her ear, waiting. Willing. Wishing. "Please answer, please answer," she whispered.

In the adjacent room, a phone rang. Momplaisir's fiance, Larry Dumond, hopped up. Answered the phone. Spoke in French.

The couple from Little Egg Harbor Township, Ocean County, spent Wednesday amid dial tones and deferred dreams, wondering whether their loved ones were still alive after a magnitude-7 earthquake devastated their native Haiti.

She worried about her mother. He worried about his son.

□ See Waiting, A10

Gov.-elect picks heads for DEP, education

■ Chris Christie picks a school-voucher proponent for education commissioner and a former energy and utility consultant with a summer home in Avalon to lead the Department of Environmental Protection.

By **MICHAEL MILLER**
Staff Writer

Two nominations for state office Gov.-elect Chris Christie made Wednesday may signal his priorities on education and the environment.

Christie's choice to head the Department of Environmental Protection, Robert Martin, of Hopewell Township, is a Republican donor and retired consultant who has a summer home in Avalon.

He is a former partner at the publicly traded consulting firm Accenture, where he worked in energy and utility consulting. In November, Christie appointed Martin to his transition team to cover those two issues. He was nominated Wednesday to take the job held by acting Commissioner Mark N. Mauriello.

Christie's pick for education commissioner, Bret Schundler, is a school-choice proponent whose selection represents Christie's strongest signal yet to the state's powerful teachers union that he intends to carry out education reforms that they oppose.

Schundler tangled with the national and state teachers unions over his support of

□ See Cabinet, A4



MARTIN



SCHUNDLER

Regulators oppose new Del. casinos

■ The Delaware panel disagrees with a consultant's report that advises adding two casinos. The idea now goes before the full Legislature.

By **DONALD WITKOWSKI**
Staff Writer

Delaware lawmakers who oversee the gaming industry are opposed to adding new casinos in a state that already has three racetrack slot parlors.

Opposition from members of the state gambling commission comes just days after a state consultant recommended two more casinos to boost Delaware's tax revenue.

TMG Consulting concluded that two additional casinos would not drive the existing slot parlors — Delaware Park, Dover Downs and Harrington Raceway — out of business, but would cut into their revenue.

But five of the six lawmakers who serve on the Sports and Video Lottery Commission believe that new casinos

□ See Delaware, A5

COMING TOMORROW

High School Sports Central

Oscro Williams is back at Bridgeton High to help build the boys basketball team into a winning program. Plus our My Life feature focuses on Atlantic City basketball player Tiana Cannon.

Forum seeks answers to rising Delaware Bay

By **DANIEL WALSH**
Staff Writer

Ever since Dave Pflueger bought his Money Island house more than five years ago, the Delaware Bay has been swallowing up his land.

Pflueger estimates he has lost about two to three feet of land on his Downe Township property over the past five to six years.

"You're always fighting it constantly," Pflueger said. "It's a never-ending battle."

Whether that land loss is due to sea-level rise or erosion is up for debate, but few dispute that it is happening at some level.

On Wednesday, more than 120 scientists, planners and

□ See Bay, A5



Staff photo by Michael Ein

A failed seawall is evidence the village of Sea Breeze in Fairfield Township is potentially the next town along the Delaware Bay that will disappear.

Sunny

High: 41
Low: 30

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