

TIMES UNION | Timesunion.com | Sunday, February 15, 2015

THE BUZZ

Where everybody knows its name

Price Chopper is such a Capital Region institution that we often forget that the Schenectady-based supermarket chain has stores across upstate New York and New England and down into Pennsylvania.

The Buzz did a rough calculation and found that Price Chopper's 134 stores are in roughly a 200-mile radius from the company's main distribution center in Rotterdam.

So if you have been playing Price Chopper's Bags2Riches game — the grand prize is \$250,000 in cash — your competition is really spread out across the Northeast.

Many of the winners so far have been from places like Saratoga Springs, Clifton Park, Troy and Loudonville.

But we were curious about the guy who won free groceries for a year.

He's Clifford from Shrewsbury, Mass., which is about 35 miles outside of Boston.

Could that be Clifford Clavin Jr., aka "Cliff," from Cheers?

Probably not, but it's a cheery thought.

—Staffreport

TOURISM



Photos by Lori Van Buren / Times Union

Cross-country skiers Kim Berger and Liz Tuttle, both of Castleton, check their location on a map after asking directions from Pine Ridge Cross Country Ski Area owner Walter Kersch on Wednesday in Poestenkill. The 22 miles of trails are all open, thanks to the 30 inches of snowfall.

Cashing in on winter

Businesses that depend on snow are ecstatic over recent deluges

By Brian Nearing

Speculator

Heading into the President's Week break, Laura O'Brien has a foot of fresh snow from last week at her family-owned Oak Mountain Ski Center in the southern Adirondacks, lifting hopes that skiers will fill the slopes.

About a hundred miles to the southeast, in the hills of Rensselaer County, trails at Pine Ridge Cross Country Ski Area in Poestenkill were loaded with packed powder and people were still coming in last week to buy season passes. To the north in the Adirondack High Peaks, hotels in Lake Placid were nearly full as excitement builds about the upcoming visit of the legendary 1980 Olympic ice hockey gold medal team.

With snow blanketing the entire state and no thaw in sight, times look good for businesses

that rely on winter tourists, who sometimes stay home if they don't see snow in the front yard. With many schools closed for the Presidents' Week vacation, this week is important to winter sports areas.

"We just have so much fluffy snow," said O'Brien, who with her husband, Matt, and his parents, Kevin and Elizabeth O'Brien, bought Oak Mountain in Speculator, Hamilton County, from the county in 2012.

"Our mountain may not be huge, but we try to have a little something for everyone," she said. "And we try to keep it affordable, so families can ski." The mountain even has its own celebrity chef — Lou Petrozza, who was a runner-up in the fourth season of the television reality cooking show "Hell's Kitchen." O'Brien said that Petrozza, who was cooking at a nearby summer camp last year, "fell out of the



Laura Weeks of Clifton Park gets help picking out warm clothing for her 11-year-old son from employee Rich Vokatis at Alpin Haus on Wednesday.

sky for us" when he came to the resort looking for a possible job.

At Pine Ridge, owner Walter Kersch had all 22 miles of his trails tracked and groomed, in forested hills piled high with up to 30 inches of snow. "I just had

two people come in to buy season passes this week," he said, during a break from an informal thank-you party for the local volunteers who help maintain trails each fall.

Please see **SNOW E11** ▶

Yet another worry: Fake tax returns

A couple I know filed joint tax returns. When they received a notice from the IRS about a credit, the wife called the IRS. That's when she found out something was amiss: She was not listed on the return. Someone else, an imposter, had filed a return in her husband's name earlier in the year before the couple filed their own return.

It appears that this is not uncommon. According to The Wall Street Journal, the IRS paid \$5.2 billion in fraudulent refunds for the 2013 tax season, while block-



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ing \$24.2 billion in additional fraudulent refunds.

In a story by Herb Weisbaum of cnbc.com on Feb. 9, he said that "security expert Brian Krebs told NBC News that he's found login credentials for TurboTax, H&R Block and other services being sold on the web

for just pennies each." Criminals use "password-stealing malware that infects end-user PCs" to obtain the names and passwords.

"Instead of using stolen Social Security numbers to create their fraudulent returns, [criminals] buy compromised credentials to gain access to past returns stored on tax-preparation software," reported Weisbaum. "Using information from a real return to create a false one improves the odds that it will evade detection."

Most taxpayers do file their

tax returns electronically, according to Becky Frost, senior manager of consumer education for Experian's ProtectMyID. Eighty-one percent of taxpayers polled in a recent survey commissioned by Experian file their tax returns electronically themselves, using tax-preparation software or through tax preparers.

What do you do if your tax return has been compromised? The IRS recommends that you complete IRS Form 14039,

Please see **JASON E2** ▶

Rotterdam troubles

It's not just Rotterdam Square Mall that is having financial troubles.

According to real estate data firm Trepp in New York City, Hanaford Plaza on Altamont Avenue long ago defaulted on its \$20 million mortgage and went into foreclosure.

At that time, it still owed \$18 million.

—Staffreport

**HEALTH CAREER
JOB FAIR**

TIMES UNION MONSTER

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