SELINS Grove — While a handful of major retailers are hiring locally for the holidays, national trends suggest those with jobs can expect more hours and those without may remain without. That’s because retailers expect a 1 percent decline in holiday sales over past year, and they’re looking to reduce operating costs, said Rachel Smith, assistant director of the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corp. It’s cheaper to pay an experienced employee for extra hours than to train a new employee, she said. That’s how it is at Country Cupboard near Lewisburg. General manager Steve Kulhavy said the complex prefers to “stretch” a bit rather than hire people it would have to lay off in January. The national sales decline was predicted by Manpower Inc.’s researchers and duplicated at the National Retail Federation, Smith said. The expected decrease, however, is less than the 3.4 percent drop in sales experienced in 2008 compared with 2007. The holiday employment gain last year was 25 percent less than it averaged the previous five years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Big retailers looking in the Valley, big retailers looking to hire seasonal workers include Sears, Walmart, Kmart, Best Buy, Kohl’s, Target and Five Below. Those are the only ones staff at the state’s job assistance center, CareerLink, in Selinsgrove, could think of Thursday, said Jamie Mercaldo, CareerLink’s employer services representative. This year, managers of stores at the Susquehanna Valley Mall in Hummels Wharf expressed no interest in holding a seasonal job fair as they had in the past, Mercaldo said. Many are only adding a person or two, she said. Nevertheless, “A lot of places in the mall are looking,” she said. Those who wish to work at the mall can visit www.susquehannavalleymall.com and click on “jobs” in the yellow band near the top of the page. There, one can find job openings at the smaller retailers. These listings may change on a daily basis. Mercaldo noted that Five Below, a new store at Monroe Marketplace, advertised on its Web site that it is interested in seeing seasonal applicants between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Wednesdays. At Monroe Marketplace’s Best Buy, C.J. Cencetti, a manager, said his store is looking for a few product processors to unload and stock, a sales associate, cashiers and customer service personnel. Applications can be submitted at www.bestbuy.com/careers, he said. Retail work, however, is not the only seasonal employment. Sue Snyder, CareerLink site administrator, said UPS is hiring in anticipation of holiday deliveries. Information can be found at UPSjobs.com. Those with truck and heavy equipment experience might call the state Department of Transportation, Mercaldo said, for likely hiring in anticipation of winter weather. Job-seekers should look around them for other ideas. Often, a job-seeker can find success with a little creative thinking and persistence, employment advisers say, although sometimes the news can be discouraging. At McClellan’s Tree Farm in Middleburg, owner Richard McClellan said he won’t have any openings that aren’t being filled by those who have worked for him before. Yet, he said, even without his Christmas trees sign placed yet, he has received 35 or 40 calls about jobs in the past month. But at CareerLink, there are more than 500 jobs posted for the five-county region it serves, Snyder said. “We have many, many jobs listed, all the way from entry-level to upper management,” Mercaldo said. “If job-seekers choose to come into any of our PA CareerLink locations, they can have the advantage of getting individual attention and help
from a staff member while searching and applying for jobs.” The Selinsgrove office is at 713 Bridge St., phone 374-5751. In Shamokin, there’s an office at 2 E. Arch St., phone 644-6570, and in Bloomsburg, at 351 Tenny St., phone 387-6288. As an alternative, job-seekers can access the Web site at www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us. Seasonal and permanent positions are listed. “We also offer many free workshops throughout the month,” Mercaldo said. “I would highly recommend these to folks who are looking to brush up on their computer, communication or interviewing skills, create a resume, etc.” Unemployment in the region has been climbing since summer, Snyder said. In Union, Snyder, Northumberland counties, there was an average 3 percent unemployment increase from September 2008 to September 2009, the most recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers available show. Montour has been more fortunate, with just a 1.4 percent increase in the jobless rate. Northumberland has the highest unemployment rate, at 9.4 percent, up from 5.8 percent in 2008. Union’s stands at 8.8, up from 5.8; Snyder is at 8.6, up from 5.3. Montour had a 4.5 percent rate in 2008, now 5.9. n E-mail comments to dianepetryk@dailyitem.com.