Residents heeded the warnings, were well prepared

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purchased their shovels, window scrapers and other products before the early-season snowstorms, so the last few days have been slow.

"Some people came the past couple of days to buy ice salt, but other than that, there weren't a lot of people here; not more than usual," O'Leary said.

Tina Biello, a Bristol resident, said cleaning up after Hercules was "easy" compared to the storms that hit last winter. Biello also noted the roads were well maintained.

"It definitely seems like people were more prepared," said Biello. "The city is always doing a good job; they do their best. The roads were passable as long as you drove slow and didn't get too close to the other people in front of you."

Biello said when she came to City True Value Hardware on Thursday, there were still snowblowers, shovels and other snow equipment available for customers to purchase. Last year, she said, it was impossible to find certain items, for many residents were buying them last minute.

Mike Orazzi | Staff

Dan Baribeault rides a snow bike at Walnut Hill Park in New Britain on Saturday morning. Looking on is Donald LeMay.

"The last two snowstorms definitely woke people up for this one," she said.

Donald Ouellette, an employee at Ingraham Manor Nursing Home on North Main Street in Bristol, said he used 10 bags of ice salt yesterday and ran out, so he came to buy more. O'Leary and another employee, Allison Gatz, helped Oullette load large bags of ice salt into the back of his truck to bring back to the nursing home. Gatz said there weren't a lot of people coming in the last few days.

"It was kind of busy during the day, but towards the night, it got kind of slow," Gatz said. "I think everyone already got what they needed beforehand."

Donald LeMay, a custodian in New Britain, brought his grandsons from Bristol to Walnut Hill Park to sled and enjoy the snow.

"We always try to get up here once or twice," said LeMay. "The kids love it here. I'm really surprised there's not more people here sledding."

LeMay, who cleaned up snow at Gaffney Elementary yesterday, said a lot of the city roads were good but because of how cold it was, the salt wasn't really working. LeMay said New Britain was a lot more prepared this year than it was last year in terms of its snow storm response.

"I think the city closed down the last two days this storm because last year when they didn't, they received a lot of heat for it," LeMay said. "For this storm they were a lot smarter and they did a good job."

Both New Britain and Bristol closed school on Thursday and Friday due to the weather. Both cities also enacted parking bans, which were lifted in late afternoon Friday in New Britain and later in the evening Friday in Bristol.

And, while the snow has stopped falling, WFSB.com reports that a mix of snow and rain is possible tonight through Monday morning. With that wintry mix, however, comes a slight increase in temperatures as the TV station's meteorologists predict a Sunday high of 36 degrees with Monday improving to 40 degrees, well above Saturday's lows in the teens.

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Bristol's First Baby is Philip Christopher Balnis

By SUSAN CORICA
STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL — Bristol's Baby New Year of 2014 is little Philip Christopher Balnis, born very early in the morning of Jan. 2. He was the first baby of the year at Bristol Hospital.

Proud parents Kristin Litwinczyk, 19, and Phil Balnis, 20, of Bristol, showed off their first bundle of joy to grandparents Kellie and Philip Balnis and aunt Leah Balnis in the hospital room later that day.

"I'm excited but tired," said Litwinczyk.

Her due date was New Year's Eve, but midnight came and went with no sign of the baby. Then at 10:30 a.m. her water broke and she went to the hospital, she recalled. "They started the Pitocin [to strengthen labor] at like 4-ish, and I started pushing at about 10."

Then at 1:56 a.m., Philip Christopher made his appearance, healthy and normal, weighing 9 pounds, 12 ounces, and 22 inches long.

"He has beautiful, beautiful black hair, a full head," said Kellie Balnis, who was holding the baby. "You had so much heartburn, huh Kristin?"

"So it's true," replied Litwinczyk, referring to the popular saying that having a lot of heartburn during pregnancy means the baby will have a lot of hair.

"This is our first grandchild. It's exciting," said Kellie Balnis. "He has a big head; he needs a bigger hat," replacing his little knit hat with a looser one.

Philip Balnis noted that he used to be the only one in the family by that name; now he is the oldest one of three generations. The new parents planned to take their baby home Saturday.

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Phil Balnis and Kristin Litwinczyk with their newborn son, Philip

State seeking ticket vending operator for busway

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WETHERSFIELD — Connecticut's Department of Transportation is seeking a firm to provide a ticket vending machine system forCTfastrak, the planned bus-only corridor being built between Hartford and New Britain.

Potential vendors have until Jan. 10 to submit letters of intent to bid on the project. The deadline to submit full proposals is Jan. 31.

The Department of Transportation will then select a preferred proposer and begin negotiating a contract.

The rapid bus transit system is scheduled to begin operations in early 2015. The ticket vending machines will be installed in each CTfasttrack station, allowing people to buy single-trip and single-day tickets.

The CTfastrak project includes 11 transit stations in New Britain, Newington, West Hartford and Hartford, with busses running every three-to-six minutes during peak commuting hours.

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