

# Community Matters

*A Voice of, by, and for the People of Delaware, Ohio*



**December 2018**  
Vol. 4, no. 6

Send info, articles, or comments to  
[delawarecommunitymatters@gmail.com](mailto:delawarecommunitymatters@gmail.com)

*Disclaimer: This newsletter is independently produced and funded. Both paper copies and electronic copies are available. Subscription is free. Also – while we strive for accuracy and will not knowingly print false information, please note that dates, events, and specifics can change. Please attempt to verify details before attending an event. We are not liable for any inconvenience or damage caused through use of information included in "Community Matters."*

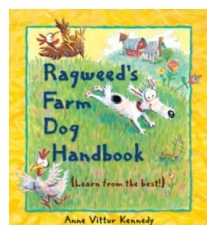
## CALENDAR OF LOCAL EVENTS

### **"Elf: The Musical" (11/30 – 12/1)**

Dempsey Middle School is presenting "Elf: The Musical, Jr." The holiday musical with songs by Matthew Sklar will be performed Fri., Nov. 30 (7 pm), and Sat., Dec. 1 (2 + 7 pm) at Hayes Performing Arts Center (Hayes High School Auditorium). Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$10 for students & seniors.

### **Kilbourne Christmas Craft Show (12/1)**

Kilbourne United Methodist Church at 5591 State Rt. 521 is inviting the public to the annual Christmas Craft Show on Sat., Dec. 1 (9 am – 2 pm). For sale are items such as homemade quilts & aprons, jams & fudge, and jewelry. Santa will be there too, from 9:30-11 am. Free & open to the public.



### **Anne Vittur Kennedy at Fundamentals (12/1)**

The Ohio author and illustrator of delightful children's books, Anne Vittur Kennedy, will visit Fundamentals at 25 W. Winter St. on Sat., Dec. 1 (1-2 pm).

### **Historical Society Open House (12/1-2)**

The Delaware County Historical Society has decorated the beautiful 1878 Victorian Nash House at 157 E. William St. for the holiday season. The Open House will take place Sat., Dec. 1 (2-5 pm), and Sun., Dec. 2 (3:30-5:30 pm, following the downtown Holiday Parade). Refreshments will be served. Free & open to the public; donations are accepted.

### **"One-Act Plays" at OWU (12/1)**

"One-Act Plays," presented by OWU's directing & playwriting classes, will be held on Sat., Dec. 1 (7 pm), on the Main Stage inside Chappellear Drama Center, 45 Rowland Ave. May contain adult themes & language. Free & open to the public.

### **Pearl Harbor Observance Day (12/2)**

A Pearl Harbor ceremony will take place Sun., Dec. 2 (12:45-1:15 pm) on the Winter St. bridge across the Olentangy River. The event will include the playing of the taps (a bugle), a rifle volley & a wreath ceremony.

### **Main Street Delaware Christmas Parade (12/2)**

The 2018 Christmas Parade will be held Sun., Dec. 2 (3 pm). The parade will step off from Mingo Park, go south on Sandusky St., and end at Wilmer St. This year's theme is "Delaware: Your Home for the Holidays."

### **Choral Art Society (12/2)**

Conducted by Jason Hiester, the Choral Art Society will perform on Sun., Dec. 2 (3:15 pm) in Gray Chapel inside OWU's University Hall, 61 S. Sandusky St. Free & open to the public.



### **Hanukkah Starts (12/2)**

Hanukkah, the 8-day Jewish Festival of Lights, begins at sundown on Sun., Dec. 2. The candles of the menorah are meant to symbolize light, warmth, and love. The center candle is traditionally used to light the other ones.

### **"Trash Menagerie" at Arts Castle (12/3 – 1/13)**

The Arts Castle at 190 W. Winter St. will host an exhibit from Dec. 3 through Jan. 1 entitled "Trash Menagerie: Repurposed Art."

### **Lessons & Carols Concert (12/3)**

This year's "Lessons and Carols" concert will be bigger and better than ever before. It will take place Mon., Dec. 3 (7 pm) in Gray Chapel inside University Hall (61 S. Sandusky St.) on the OWU campus and features Christmas carols and spiritual readings. In addition to the Ohio Wesleyan Choral Art Society, the concert will feature the Delaware Community Chorus and Linworth United Methodist Church Chancel Choir. The lighting of OWU's Hudler Memorial Christmas Tree will follow the concert as part of a campus Winterfest celebration. Free & open to the public.

### **Stormwater Workshop (12/5)**

The City of Delaware & the Olentangy Watershed Alliance (OWA) are sponsoring a workshop for residents, stakeholders, developers, site inspectors, HOAs & engineers on construction stormwater & pond maintenance as they relate to Delaware. The workshop, which will be on the technical side, covers the City's stormwater application & plan-review process as well as OEPA's new

regulations. The workshop will be held Wed., Dec. 5 (10:30 am – 2 pm) at the YMCA (National Guard Conference Room), 1121 S. Houk Rd. Lunch is provided. The event is free & open to the public, but registration is required by Fri., Nov. 30. To RSVP, contact Caroline Cicerchi, Delaware's Watershed / Sustainability Coordinator ([ccicerchi@delawareohio.net](mailto:ccicerchi@delawareohio.net)).



#### **Invitation to Tour HelpLine (12/5, 12/18)**

The public is invited to tour HelpLine of Delaware and Morrow Counties, located at 11 N. Franklin St., on Nov. 28, Dec. 5, and Dec. 18. Please RSVP with Tamiko Vinson-Reid ([tvinson@helplinedelmor.org](mailto:tvinson@helplinedelmor.org)). To learn more about HelpLine, visit [www.helplinedelmor.org](http://www.helplinedelmor.org).

#### **"A Juggler's Christmas" (12/5)**

The Delaware Main Library offers Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" as told by Cincinnati-based juggler Tom Sparough ([www.spacepainter.com](http://www.spacepainter.com)). The event will be held Wed., Dec. 5 (6:30-7:30 pm) at 84 E. Winter St. Audience participation is welcome! Free & open to the public.

#### **Retired Teachers Meet (12/6) – \$**

The Delaware County Retired Teachers Association will hold their winter luncheon on Thurs., Dec. 6 (12 pm) at Willow Brook Christian Village at 100 Willow Brook Way, off US 23 S. The program includes a performance by the Hayes Singers. All retired teachers, administrators, spouses & friends are welcome. The cost for the luncheon is \$15. The deadline for reservation was 11/29, so this is merely a reminder for those planning to attend. – The DCRTA meets quarterly.

#### **First Thursday Organ Recital (12/6)**

Dr. Joseph Musser will give the First Thursday Organ Recital at Asbury UMC (55 W. Lincoln Ave.) on Thurs., Dec. 6 (12-15-12:45 pm). Music for Advent and Christmas is on the program. Feel free to bring your lunch; tea & coffee are provided. Free & open to the public.

#### **OWU Science Lecture on Vampire Bats (12/6)**

Dr. Gerry Carter from OSU will be the last "Science Lecture" speaker this fall semester. He will discuss "Cooperative Relationships in Vampire Bats" on Thurs., Dec. 6 (4:10 pm) in OWU's Science Center (Rd. 163). Free & open to the public.

#### **First Friday (12/7)**

Main Street Delaware is conducting a "Holiday Recipe Tour" on Fri., Dec. 7 (6-9 pm). Pick up your starting recipe card at any of the participating locations, then wind your way through the remaining stores to complete the book. In addition, there are carriage rides and a Santa House at the Strand Theatre on E. Winter St.

#### **The M.E.E.K. Quartet (12/7)**

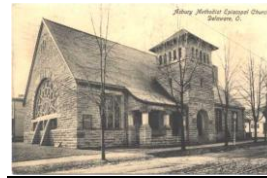
Warrensburg UMC is hosting the M.E.E.K. Quartet on Fri., Dec. 7 (7 pm), for a sing-along performance of "The Sweet Sounds of Christmas." The church is located at 1025 State Rt. 257 on the Scioto River between Routes 36 & 37. The M.E.E.K. Quartet is a vocalist group of male & female voices with guitar accompaniment. Refreshments will be served. Free & open to the public.

#### **Annual Christmas Breakfast (12/8) – \$**

The Hardware Exchange at 141 S. Sandusky St. (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) is hosting the John Freeman Foundation's "Whatever You Think It's Worth" Annual Christmas Breakfast on Sat., Dec. 8 (5:30-11:30 am, or until the food runs out). The charity event began in 1978 and is now in its 40<sup>th</sup> year.

#### **Sustainable Delaware Ohio (12/8)**

Sustainable Delaware Ohio (SDO) meets on 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month at First Presbyterian Church (73 W. Winter St.). Please use the entrance off N. Washington St., behind Willis Education Center. The next meeting is Sat., Dec. 8 (9-11 am). – SDO's mission is to promote economic, social & environmental sustainability through awareness, advocacy & action. The meetings are open to the public, but only dues-paying members are eligible to vote.



#### **NNA Historical Holiday Home Tour (12/8) – \$**

The Northwest Neighborhood Association's 2018 Historical Holiday Home Tour is Sat., Dec. 8 (3-7 pm). This is a self-guided tour, and the 8 sites do not need to be visited in any particular order. Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 on the day of the tour. Advance tickets are available at the Delaware Antique Mall (18 N. Sandusky St.) or the Edwin Loy Home (27 N. Sandusky St.). You can also buy vouchers online with PayPal at [www.delawareanna.org](http://www.delawareanna.org) and exchange them at Gallery 22 (22 E. Winter St.). Same-day tickets are also available at Gallery 22 from 2-5 pm.

#### **PIN's Holiday Clearing House (12/9)**

People in Need (PIN) is once again collecting new toys, winter clothing, groceries, toiletries, and money to share with the many people in Delaware County who are in need of assistance. In 2017, the clearing house event on the second Sunday in December served 2,000 adults and children. Donations will be accepted at the Delaware County Fairgrounds Coliseum (236 Pennsylvania Ave.) through Dec. 7, and at the Delaware City and county fire stations. Distribution day will be Sun., Dec. 9 (8:30 am – 5 pm) at the Fairgrounds. Escorts will guide people through the process and assist them with selections. There will also be home deliveries to some seniors. For more info on PIN, visit [www.delawarepeopleinneed.org](http://www.delawarepeopleinneed.org).



#### **Central Ohio Symphony (12/9) – \$**

The Central Ohio Symphony will have two identical holiday concerts on Sun., Dec. 9, at 2 pm & at 4:30 pm, to be held in Gray Chapel inside OWU's University Hall (61 S. Sandusky St.) This concert's fanfare was written by none other than Delaware Probate Judge David Hejmanowski. Powell native Kristen Basore, music teacher & soprano soloist, returns to perform seasonal favorites and a new piece by Westerville composer Ken McCaw that includes dancers from Buckeye Gymnastics. Additional works include Debussy's "Claire de lune," Strauß' "Radetzky March" and excerpts from Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker." Tickets are \$25, \$20 for seniors. Additional discounts apply for students and children 6 & under.

#### **Paul Bielatowicz Concert (12/10)**

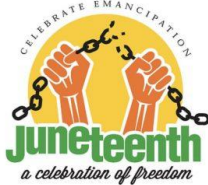
British musician Paul Bielatowicz (electric guitar) returns to Delaware on a solo tour Mon., Dec. 10 (7:30 pm) He will once again perform at Blend of Seven Winery, 1400 Stratford Rd. The concert combines music by Claude Debussy and others with the early silent movies of George Méliès. Tickets are \$17 cash (or \$20 credit card) and are available through Eventbrite, Blend of Seven Winery, Pat's Endangered Species, the Delaware Music Academy, and at the door. – "Community Matters" recommends that you familiarize yourself with Bielatowicz through YouTube beforehand because his music may or may not be what you expect.

#### **Hayes High School Winter Concert (12/10)**

The annual Hayes High School Winter Concert will take place Mon., Dec. 10 (8-10 pm) inside Hayes Auditorium, 289 Euclid Ave. The conductor is Stacy Lemke. Free & open to the public.

#### **Olentangy Watershed Alliance (12/11)**

The Olentangy Watershed Alliance (OWA) meets monthly at the City of Delaware's Wastewater Treatment Plant, 225 Cherry St. The next meeting is scheduled for Tues., Dec. 11 (10 am). The meetings are open to the public. – OWA's mission is to work in partnership with agriculture, urban & other local communities to understand, appreciate & responsibly use the Olentangy River, its tributaries & watershed. The vision is to enhance & preserve the water quality, natural integrity, scenic beauty & recreational value of the northern Olentangy watershed. (Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed, or FLOW, is OWA's sister organization.)



#### **One People (12/13)**

The December meeting of One People is Thurs., Dec. 13 (7 pm) in the library room of First Presbyterian Church (73 W. Winter St.). (This is a change from the original 12/6 date.) One People is a cadre of residents interested in uniting Delaware's ethnic groups in Delaware and strengthening the community. One People is the organization behind the annual Juneteenth Celebration in Delaware. To learn more, visit [www.facebook.com/onecommunity43015](http://www.facebook.com/onecommunity43015).

#### **Delaware Community Concert Band (12/13)**

The winter/ holiday concert of the Delaware Community Concert Band is on Thurs., Dec. 13 (7 pm) at Dempsey Middle School Commons, 599 Pennsylvania Ave. Under the direction of artistic director Anne Brandyberry, the concert band has been rehearsing hard for the event, which is free & open to the public. – The DCCB is a group of amateur musicians who play for their own fulfillment, fellowship & enjoyment. Anyone who reads music and plays an instrument is welcome. There are no auditions.

#### **Wreaths Across America (12/15)**

On Sat., Dec. 15 (12 pm), Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 1095, are hosting "Wreaths Across America" in the Veterans West area of Delaware's Oak Grove Cemetery on S. Sandusky St. On that day, wreaths will be placed on the graves of veterans. The public is invited to attend. Wreaths are \$15 each and may be designated in honor or memory of specific individuals.

#### **Democrats Celebrate Holiday Party (12/15) – \$**

In lieu of its monthly meeting, the Delaware County Democratic Party is having a Holiday Party on Sat., Dec. 15 (5-8 pm) in 301 Merrick Hall on the OWU campus. The ballroom on the third floor of Merrick Hall is handicap-accessible. Partake in the hors d'oeuvres and desserts. A cash bar is available from 5:30-8 pm. Free parking can be found at Selby Stadium and the SCSC Science Center. There is no charge for the event, but please RSVP by 12/8 by clicking on the link you received in your invitation.

#### **Christmas Cookie Sale at Rural Chapel (12/16) – \$**

Rural Chapel United Methodist Church at 5860 Cheshire Rd. in Galena, just east of the Alum Creek reservoir, is having a Christmas cookie sale on Sun., Dec. 16 (11:30 am – 2 pm). The sale follows the church's annual youth Christmas play / musical that will be performed during Sunday services. Those buying cookies will be handed a Styrofoam container to use to pick out their cookies. Containers will then be weighed at check-out. Cost for cookies begins at \$7 per pound. The sale lasts until 2 pm or until all cookies are sold. Proceeds will be used to benefit the church's various mission projects. A cookie-decorating table with icing and sprinkles will be set up nearby.

#### **Delaware Community Chorus (12/16) – \$**

Under the direction of Joshua Brodbeck, the Delaware Community Chorus will perform its annual holiday concert on Sun., Dec. 16 (3 + 5 pm) at Asbury United Methodist Church (55 W. Lincoln Ave.). The concert includes Bach's "Magnificat" in D major. Tickets are \$15 and available from any chorus member, through [www.delawarechorus.com](http://www.delawarechorus.com) & Eventbrite, and at the door.

#### **"The Economics of Happiness" (12/20)**

The Central Ohio Communities Project and Sustainable Delaware Ohio are inviting the community to a winter-solstice celebration on Thurs., Dec. 20 (7:30-9:30 pm) at the Andrews House, 39 W. Winter St. We will watch and discuss the short documentary "The Economics of Happiness," have an open-mic session with readings and songs about the Earth and nature, and then go on an optional "Nature in the City" hike with Preservation Parks naturalist Casey Smith. The family-friendly event is free & open to the public.

#### **Winter Solstice (12/21)**

Winter officially begins Fri., Dec. 21. It is the shortest day of the year. After winter solstice, the days are getting longer again. However, people in the northern hemisphere will not notice much difference until about Jan. 7 or so. The days are gaining only a minute of sunlight right before sunset. After Jan. 7, two extra minutes of sunlight are steadily gained – one minute at sunrise and one minute at sunset.

#### **Book Talks at Stratford (12/21)**

The last "Book Talks" of the year is devoted to British scientist Charles Darwin and his relationship to the natural world. Under the leadership of retired librarian Liz Barker, "Book Talks" meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of each month (6:30-8 pm) at Stratford Ecological Center at 3083 Liberty Rd. The cost is \$10 for the year.

#### **Celebrate New Year's Eve at the Arts Castle (12/31) – \$**

The Arts Castle at 190 W. Winter St. is hosting a New Year's Eve fundraising party on Mon., Dec. 31 (9 pm – 12:30 am). The evening includes valet parking, hors d'oeuvres, adult beverages, an exhibition of recycled art & music by John Schwab (guitar) of McGuffey Lane. The event is limited to 150 persons. Tickets are \$75 per person.

## **CITY OF DELAWARE**



#### **Zion United Church of Christ – A Place of Warmth**

Zion United Church of Christ at 51 W. Central Ave. is once again providing "A Place of Warmth" for single homeless men this winter. The details are unchanged from previous years. The center will be open any time the temperature is predicted to drop to 20°F or below during the night. It accepts guests from 8-10 pm who may stay until 8 am the following morning. The Center does not accept homeless women, but will help them find a suitable place. – On designated days, sandwich signs at the Public Library and in front of City Hall let people know that Zion is open that night.

#### **Delaware's Population Growth**

According to data provided by the City of Delaware, the population continues to climb. Sometime in spring of 2018, it reached and exceeded the 40,000 mark. As of October 2018, the population is estimated to be between 40,800 and 41,000 and expected to top 41,500 by the end of the year. This represents a growth rate of 17.4% over 2010 or about a 1.65% annual increase since the last census. It puts the City of Delaware on pace to a 20% increase from the 2010 to the 2020 census.

#### **The City of Delaware in December**

City Council will meet Mon., Dec. 10, and have its year-end meeting Thurs., Dec. 20. Additional meetings include the Planning Commission (Wed., Dec. 5), the Board of Zoning Appeals (Wed., Dec.

12), the Parking & Safety Committee (Mon., Dec. 17, 6 pm), and the Historic Preservation Commission (Wed., Dec. 19). The December meetings of Parks & Recreation and the Shade Tree Commission are canceled. Meetings typically take place at 7 pm (unless noted otherwise) in City Hall (2<sup>nd</sup> floor), 1 S. Sandusky St.

### **2019 Budget Process for City of Delaware**

The budget's 1<sup>st</sup> reading and 1<sup>st</sup> public hearing was Mon., Nov. 26, 2018. A special budget work session is scheduled for Mon., Dec. 3 (6:30 pm). A 2<sup>nd</sup> reading & 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing is scheduled for Dec. 10, with adoption planned for Dec. 20.

### **Delaware's "Community Promotion Fund"**

Delaware's "Community Promotion Fund" allocates revenues from the city's hotel/motel-occupancy tax to events, organizations, and activities that promote the community and other cultural opportunities. The total amount allocated for the proposed 2019 budget is \$89,000, up from \$82,000 last year. The biggest chunk (\$35,000 or 39.3%) is for the annual July Fourth fireworks. Main Street Delaware is the largest single beneficiary with \$30,000 or 33.7%, followed by the Second Ward Community Initiative (SWCI) with \$11,500, the Arts Castle (\$10,000), and the Central Ohio Symphony (also \$10,000). In addition, the amount of \$4,500 has been allocated in support of the proposed Rutherford B. Hayes statue on the corner of Sandusky and William Street. It is not clear how proposals are solicited. The Community Promotion Fund is not well-known, and there may be groups out there such as the Arena Fair Theatre that may not even know about it and/or have not been encouraged to apply for it. There is also some mystery surrounding the selection committee, grant eligibility, and the selection criteria. It seems some members of City Council and the City Manager make the decisions, behind closed doors. "Community Matters" would like to see an annual public call for submissions, a list of committee members (published on the city's website), and a set of objective evaluation categories that help determine which recipients will receive grant money. As Delaware is in process of adding downtown hotels and more bed-tax money will become available in the future, it is imperative that transparency and accountability be part of the process.

### **Delaware's Recycling Program**

The recycling market collapsed in 2018 after China stopped accepting recyclables from America. As a result, Sims Brothers based in Marion gave the City notice that it would be leaving the market at the end of the year. This resulted in the City issuing a request for proposals for the service, which Sims bid on, along with Rumpke Waste Services based in Columbus. Sims' rate was slightly less, so the City will be contracting with them in 2019 and 2020. The increased recycling tipping fees are expected to cost the average residential customer approx. \$1 more per month (\$12 more per year), increasing the current monthly rate from \$19.73 to \$20.73. Beginning in 2019, the City will be required to pay \$89 per ton for the transfer of its recycling to a Sims Brothers' processing operation in Marion. In all, the City's budget for 2019 reflects a total increase of approx. \$150,000 in tipping fees associated with the curbside recycling program.

### **Demolition of Blighted Properties**

The City of Delaware continues to pursue an aggressive policy of demolishing so-called blighted and condemned homes. "This activity has resulted in about two dozen blighted properties being razed in recent years," the 2019 budget proposal says. The continued removal of blighted and condemned properties remains "a strategic goal." Two more buildings (at 246 Vernon Ave. and 62 Spring St.) are currently slated for removal with the help of state and federal grants.

No city or county wants blighted areas, and in many cases it makes perfect economic sense to demolish abandoned structures that are beyond help. However, in many cases it would make economic and social sense to rehabilitate and restore existing homes instead of investing \$10,000 or \$20,000 to raze them. Sometimes all it would take is a new floor or roof, a new water heater or a new porch. Habitat for Humanity in Delaware & Union Counties and Habitat for Humanity in Franklin County have committed more resources to making necessary home repairs. MORPC has urged its members to do more to save and restore existing structures instead of razing them. The Ohio Housing Finance Agency has criticized agencies of being too heavily

focused on blight demolition and less focused on helping homeowners. It should also be noted that blight removal is a form of social engineering that often occurs in distressed, low-and-moderate-income neighborhoods. It can have the intended or unintended consequence of destroying history and eradicating communities of color, especially when done on a massive scale. It is indeed peculiar that cities often focus on residential blight in black neighborhoods while ignoring blight in industrial zones.

On Nov. 26, a member of the public encouraged City Council to take a more balanced approach when it comes to the demolition of blighted and condemned housing stock.

### **Delaware's Tree Canopy**

The City of Delaware's Shade Tree Commission (STC) is tasked "to maintain an equivalent tree canopy citywide." According to the City's Codified Ordinances (Section 1168), all healthy major trees must either be preserved or replaced in all zoning districts. There are 3 ways to do this: on-site replacement, a tree-bank site option, and a tree-bank fund option (a fee in lieu of an actual planting). STC is in fact not only determined to preserve the trees within its purview, but is eager to expand to expand the existing tree canopy. It has begun to explore ways to assess the exact percentage of the city's tree canopy, compare that figure with other municipalities, and to improve the tree canopy if found to be deficient.

This noble mission, however, is being undermined by the City's Planning Dept. Under pressure from the Building Industry Association (BIA), Planning has started to give builders permission to remove trees without replacing them all. These discussions started in 2017, but STC was never consulted about them. Requests to have a seat at the table were rebuffed. As a result of these conversations, from which STC was excluded, Delaware's Tree-Preservation Regulations (Section 1168) were effectively superseded by the following new policy (which, by the way, was never enacted by City Council): If a developer promises to preserve certain individual trees or a stand of mature trees, they receive "credit" for these. For example, a PMU site may have the equivalent of 1,000 caliper inches of trees. 500 caliper inches will be removed while 500 caliper inches will be preserved. Because the developer receives credit for the 500 preserved caliper inches, s/he is off the hook for the other 500. The benefit for the builder is clear – it can save big money. However, this scheme is antithetical to the decades-old mission of STC and has already resulted in several negatives, e.g., lost revenue for the tree-bank fund and a net reduction of the city's tree canopy. In 2018, very little money has so far come in for the tree-bank fund (\$7,100), and a dozen or more of development projects have led to the loss of thousands of caliper inches in all parts of the city.

Section 1168 of the City's Ordinances ("Tree Preservation Regulations") does not permit this scheme, so Planning came up with a rationale based on Section 1147.05. There it states that 19 plan-review criteria and factors are to be considered when preliminary and final plans are submitted. Item #n lists the desirability of preserving natural features such as "stream beds, mature stands of trees, individual trees of substantial age or size, and rock outcroppings." The protection and preservation of natural features should indeed be a criterion to be considered during plan discussions. However, to conclude from Section 1147.05 (n) that monetary "credit" should be assigned when builders follow the common-sense benchmarks listed is a flimsy, illegitimate misinterpretation not based in law or fact. The letter and the spirit of 1147.05 do not support this specious argument. Developers do not get "credit" for any of the other 18 items listed. Sewers, walkways, parking lots, dumpster screening, landscaping, retention ponds, etc., are required conditions to be met, not things developers can opt out of and get "credit" and discounts for.

Obviously, trees that developers let stand need not be replaced. In that sense, they do get "credit" for tree preservation. But to conclude that if they preserve 500 caliper inches they can remove 500 more caliper inches with impunity and at no cost for them is in direct violation of both the letter and the spirit of Section 1168.

### **HPC Again Rejects Demolition of Sheets Building**

At its 11/28 meeting, the Historic Preservation Commission once again rejected a request to demolish the former Engineering Building at 20 E. William St., also known as the Sheets Building, which has been sitting vacant since 2015. The City of Delaware has been

eager to raze it to build 11 more parking spaces for its "Campus," consisting of City Hall (1 S. Sandusky St.) and the former "Delaware Gazette" Building (18 E. William St.), now shared with Co-Hatch. Maybe the hope was that the departure of former HPC chair Roger Koch had changed the equation. However, HPC was unmoved by the City's attempt to dress up the same old project by adding "a City of Delaware Welcome Center" (an unmanned kiosk), "a public ADA-accessible restroom" (a porta john), and "green space" (2 trees) to the parking lot. It is the mission of HPC to protect and preserve historic buildings and Delaware's historic district, and that's what the commission's decision on Nov. 29 reflected. – The demolition project was approved and funded by City Council a while back. It is therefore entirely possible that City staff and City Council will overrule HPC's recommendation.

### **City Signs Contract with Polco**

At a recent City Council meeting, City Manager Tom Homan publicly confirmed that the City of Delaware has signed a contract with Polco. Polco (also spelled POLCO) is a technology platform based in Madison, Wisconsin and designed to foster civic participation. Cities around the nation are using Polco to better engage residents in a discussion on a variety of issues and questions surrounding the future of their communities. Polco helps municipal officials present questions, surveys, prompts, proposals & background information to residents and generate broad, organized, fast & reliable input to inform local policy decisions. The company will not share private information with others. To learn more about the company and how it works, visit [www.polco.us](http://www.polco.us). So far, however, Delaware has not yet made a public announcement about Polco.

### **Rutherford B. Hayes Statue**

Efforts are underway to erect a statue of Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893) at the southwest corner of Sandusky and William streets. Hayes was born in Delaware, Ohio and served as U.S. president from 1877 through 1881. The existing fountain will be maintained and a 7-foot-tall statue built in front of it. The committee working on the project hopes to have the work done in time for Hayes' 197<sup>th</sup> birthday on Oct. 4, 2019. The metal sculptor is Alan Cottrill, an Ohio artist based in Zanesville where he runs a studio and a gallery. He has done full-size busts and sculptures of many famous people and is a nationally recognized artist.

### **Yard-Waste Collection in Winter**

Yard waste includes lawn trimmings, leaves, vines, brush & garden waste. Yard waste does not include non-biodegradable material. The City of Delaware provides this service on the scheduled refuse collection day from mid-April through mid-December. In 2018, the last day is Fri., Dec. 14.

Christmas trees will be collected the first full week after the New Year's holiday (i.e., the week of 1/7). Trees and holiday greenery will be collected on the scheduled refuse collection days through the end of January, along with any residual yard waste. All trees must be free of stands, lights, decorations & plastic bags, or they will be left behind.

### **The Problem with the City-Manager Model**

The majority of Franklin County's 13 cities (Dublin, Hilliard, New Albany, Pickerington, Powell, Upper Arlington, and Worthington) have city managers. The rest has elected mayors who serve as chief executives. About 62% of U.S. cities with at least 25,000 residents had city managers in 2015, according to a recent article in the Columbus Dispatch.

On one level, it makes perfect sense to employ professional city managers who handle the day-to-day operations efficiently. Not every elected politician has the necessary expertise to run a city. On the other hand, there are deep and systemic risks for democracy involved. Some communities have rejected the idea of unelected city managers who are not accountable to the public and who cannot be voted out. With city managers there is indeed a tendency to handle things "on the administrative level," outside the public view. This takes democratic control out of the hands of residents. Once a city manager is hired and entrenched, many key questions are preliminarily decided in private interactions with stakeholders, among the experts, within the bureaucracy, behind closed doors, or in executive sessions.

Administrative bloat is a related consequence as the city manager will want to hire assistant managers, more accountants, more lawyers, more IT personnel, etc. These technical experts will perform the essential work, which can lead to the perception that outcomes are predetermined and that public input and scrutiny is unwelcome. Then, to add insult to injury, all these hired people will produce memos, agendas, reports, and plans that are hundreds of pages long. Even if you work your way through these tedious and technical documents, it is often not enough to understand the hidden intentions behind them. To decode the language, you also would have to follow the proceedings of the Planning Commission, the Finance Commission, the retreats, the meetings with consultants, the CIP sessions, the budget workshops, etc. Ordinary citizens do not have the time and wherewithal to stay on top of all that. Even the local press is only capable to capture and report on highlights here and there. No wonder, then, that many distrustful residents, often without hard evidence, contend that the system is rigged and that corruption and deceit are rife.

The use of city managers is a double-edged sword. The model, which is likely here to stay, can result in greater professionalism and efficiency. At the same time, it adds another layer of opacity to an already oblique process.

### **Hayes High School Shuts Down**

On Nov. 7, 18-year-old Hayes High School student Troy F. Ferguson was overheard by students making school-shooting comments and bringing a gun to school. Police investigated and found a .22-caliber semi-automatic handgun in his vehicle, an air-powered pistol, rope, a gas can, a wig, and a fake beard. Ferguson was taken into custody and transferred to a secure medical facility for an evaluation. He was taken to the Delaware County Jail after spending about a week in the hospital and was arraigned on Nov. 15. Bond was set at \$150,000 and a pre-trial hearing was scheduled for Nov. 26. Besides legal difficulties, he faces school discipline up to expulsion. Out of an abundance of caution, Superintendent Paul Craft closed Hayes High School for Nov. 8 because it was not yet certain that Ferguson acted alone. Classes resumed on Nov. 9 without incident.



### **City Council Approves Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers**

Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers is coming to Delaware's east side in 2019. On Nov. 7, the Planning Commission approved the proposed franchise at 720 Sunbury Rd., on the southeast corner of Sunbury Rd. (US 36/37) and Mill Run Crossing. City Council followed suit on Nov. 12. Raising Cane's is a Texas-based sit-down restaurant chain with over 400 branches around the nation and in the Middle East. The one closest to Delaware is at 2085 Polaris Pkwy. The Delaware franchise will have a drive-through and a small outdoor patio with a steel awning. It will be open from 10:30 am to 11 pm or, on weekends, to 12 pm. The developer hopes to break ground in early spring and open in summer 2019. – According to Wikipedia, the name "Raising Cane" is also an intentional pun on the term "Raising Cain," a biblical reference to Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis and a term meaning "to cause havoc" or "to create problems."

### **City Council Approves Wesleyan Inn**

On Nov. 12, Delaware City Council also approved the Wesleyan Inn, a proposed hotel at 235 W. William St. The old Perkins House will be preserved and restored for this purpose. A new structure will be added to the south side for a total of 43 units. The home at 239 W. William St. will be razed to make room for a landscaped buffer zone to the residential district on the west side. The developer, Jim Manos, has accumulated hundreds of historic OWU and Brown Jug sports memorabilia and plans to make them the theme of his boutique hotel.



*A typical 5-story Fairfield Inn Marriott. This one is in New York.*

### **Mariott Fairfield Inn Proposed for Downtown Delaware**

In addition to the Wesleyan Inn at 235 W. William St. (now fully approved) and the suggested Hampton Inn at 7 & 27 Spring St., a third hotel has been proposed for downtown Delaware. The 5-story, 104-room Mariott Fairfield Inn & Suites would be constructed at the corner of E. Winter St. and N. Union St., north of Sarah Moore and the Public Library and south of the Justice Center. The existing PNC drive-through would be razed. An adjacent 300-car parking garage would be built in a joint partnership between the City of Delaware and the Mariott Fairfield Inn, although at the moment an MOU does not exist. (For more details and design images, check the agenda of the Historic Preservation Commission of 11/28/18.)

If all three hotels were approved and built, the total number of units would be 265. It is not clear if Delaware needs this many hotel beds. A while back, Economic Development Director Sean Hughes expressed skepticism that the city could sustain all three. Maybe he has changed his mind since. Never publicly discussed has been the question how the proposed new hotels would impact the existing motels and hotels on the outskirts of Delaware. Some of them may not survive the competition and may become vacant buildings.

### **A Screening of "Transition 2.0"**

On Nov. 27, the Central Ohio Communities Project and Sustainable Delaware Ohio hosted "Transition 2.0," the 2012 documentary by Emma Goude. The documentary, narrated by "Transition Town" co-founder Rob Hopkins, mentions numerous projects that the various communities have developed. Among others, there is gardening, composting, recycling, bicycling, solar energy, crowd-funding, clean-ups, street beautification, reskilling, teaching, local currencies, and co-ops owned and operated by neighborhoods. Several dozen interested people showed up.

"Transition Town" is an international movement that started in 2006. It is a grassroots initiative that focuses on building cohesive, resilient, and thriving communities. Over 1,200 cities and towns around the world are already on the official Transition Town list, with at least 160 of those being in the U.S., from major cities like Pittsburgh and Omaha to smaller places like Berea, Kentucky and Goshen, Indiana. Many members around the world are motivated by the clear and present danger of climate change. They see the need to reduce greenhouse gases and to transition from fossil fuels to cleaner and renewable energies. But there are many other aspects to the movement as well, including the desire to support and strengthen more locally based food systems. Member communities have a high degree of autonomy and can create their own goals and strategies. In each case, however, it is clear that the tenet of the Transition Movement is to effect deep and lasting transformational change in the areas of economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

With the screening of the film, the Central Ohio Community Project hopes to start a conversation about how to make Delaware a "Transition Town." It is everyone's goal to see the local community continue to flourish economically, be unified socially, and be healthy environmentally. Building on past and current efforts and successes, the "Transition Town" movement can be the vehicle to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come. If interested in participating in these efforts, please leave your name and contact information after the film or get in touch with Terry Hermsen ([thermsen@otterbein.edu](mailto:thermsen@otterbein.edu)).

### **"Pics & Sticks" at Gallery 22**

"Pics & Sticks" is a Gallery 22 art exhibit (22 E. Winter St.) that runs through Dec. 22. On view are photographs from around the globe that physician Steve Hirsch has taken. They are printed on metal, which gives them an otherworldly sheen. Diane Hodges, who is the executive director of the Arts Castle, has created a number of

miniature horses with nothing but sticks and twigs. An owner and rider of horses, she has the remarkable ability to capture the spirit and essence of walking, trotting, or grazing horses with very simple, natural materials. Gallery 22 is open Fridays & Saturdays from 6-8:30 pm.

### **Old Dog Now Open**

Old Dog Alehouse & Brewery at 13 W. William St. opened Nov. 11. It is a full-service restaurant, serving brunch (on Sundays), lunch, and dinner. Customers can also buy sandwiches and salads. The brewery will open in January or February, but there is plenty of other beer available. For now, the opening hours are Tues. & Wed., 11 am – 9 pm, Thurs. 11 am – 10 pm, Fri.-Sat. 11 am – 11 pm, and Sun. 10 am – 9 pm. It is closed Mondays. To learn more, visit [www.olddogalehouse.com](http://www.olddogalehouse.com) or their Facebook page.

### **Delaware County Community Market Closes**

The Delaware County Community Market at 222 W. William St. is closing, effective Dec. 24, 2018. This will be a tremendous loss, and many in the community will miss the store. Below is what owner Rick Donovo posted on Facebook on Nov. 6:

*"To the Delaware County Community:*

*"What a long strange trip it's been." In 2009 my father, my brother, and I decided that we would open a produce market in part of our building on East William Street with a twist. It was going to be a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization where customers could buy good quality food and items and contribute 20% of their purchases to any Delaware County nonprofit of their choice. As a result we opened the Delaware County Community Market Corporation (DCCMC) on April 10, 2010.*

*During the past eight and a half years DCCMC, with the support of thousands of Delaware residents, has managed to arrange donations in excess of \$400,000 to over 100 different nonprofit organizations in Delaware County. Along the way DCCMC has provided a place for hundreds of vendors to display their items and supplement their income.*

*The time has come to end this trip. The Delaware County Community Market will end operations on December 24, 2018.*

*We owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to the countless customers who have supported DCCMC over the years. Reconfirming the fact we live in the best community in the nation! Without these customers we could never have achieved what we did. We wish to thank the many nonprofit organizations within Delaware County that promoted our services as well as utilizing us for their catering needs. Finally, but not least of all, we wish to thank Bob Sullivan-Neer and Matthew Neer-Sullivan as well as all the people who have worked here over the years, incessantly offering superior service to our customers. Their attitude has always been welcoming and helpful to our shoppers. We assure our customers that we will continue to service your requests until December 24 in the same manner we have built our reputation on.*

*Sincerely,  
Rick Dinovo"*

### **Josie Posie Out of Business**

Josie Posie Flowers went out of business and liquidated the contents of their 4,000-square-foot florist store at 27 W. William St. #C at a Nov. 11 auction. The sale included fixtures such as a walk-in cooler. The store used to sell flowers, furniture, home décor, and gifts. It is now sitting completely empty and awaiting a new tenant.

### **Multiple Toy Drives on Dec. 1**

At least 3 toy drives are scheduled for Sat., Dec. 1. Please note that only new, unwrapped toys can be accepted.

1. The Common Ground Free Store at 193 E. Central Ave. is collecting children's toys from 9 am to 2 pm at William Street UMC, 28 W. William St. Donations can also be dropped off at E. Central Ave. on days the store is open.

2. The Eastside Mission Church at 32 Joy Ave. is holding a toy drive on Sat., Dec. 1 (9:30 am – 12 pm) in its parking lot. In 2017,

Eastside Mission Church donated some 2,000 toys to 5 local groups and to Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus.

**3. Roop's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Toy Drop-Off** for People in Need (PIN) will take place Sat., Dec. 1 (12-5 pm) in the City parking lot at 17 N. Union St. Accepted are toys for boys and girls as well as cash or checks for gifts cards for older children. The event features firefighters and Santa Claus. The tradition was started by Al Roop, former owner of Roop's Bar.



### **"Rugged Maniac" Is Coming to Delaware in 2019**

The Delaware County Fairgrounds will host "Rugged Maniac" on Sat., May 11, 2019. The 3-mile course will include some 25 obstacles. There will be water slides, underground tunnels, barbed wire, fire jumps & trampolines. Participants should expect to get wet and muddy. "Rugged Maniac" races are hosted annually in about 30 cities across the nation. Organizers expect thousands of competitors to attend the Delaware event. In addition to the obstacle course, there will be a festival at which visitors can participate in pie-eating & stein-hoisting contests, ride a mechanical bull, dance, shop, eat, and drink beer. Registration is now underway. The cost is \$49 through Jan. 11, \$59 through Feb. 8, \$69 through March 22, \$79 through April 19, \$89 through May 8, and \$100 on the day of the race. For more info, visit [www.ruggedmaniac.com](http://www.ruggedmaniac.com). According to the website, Rugged Maniac supports the American Cancer Society.



*Do you know what and where is this? Send us your answer and you may win a prize!*

## **OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY**

### **Economic Outlook Conference 2019**

On Nov. 13, OWU's Economics & Business Dept. hosted the Economic Outlook Conference 2019, an annual event. This year's panelists were Deborah Scherer, Mark Schweitzer, and Ian Sheldon. The event was moderated by Goran Skosples. All 3 speakers stated that the economy is currently humming along, with solid growth. However, they also noted that there are dark clouds on the horizon. Compared to last year's outlook, the prospect for 2019 is definitely less bright. Scherer remarked that Ohio's economy is "integrated in the global supply chain," esp. with respect to Canada, China & Mexico, and that the international companies she deals with in Central Ohio are increasingly hesitant to make commitments in light of the uncertainty and risks the on-going trade war entails. Schweitzer made no mention of the tariffs, but he did predict a slower national growth rate for 2019.

It fell to Sheldon, a British-born economy professor at OSU, to discuss the current trade war and the concerns surrounding it at length. In his view, trade is not "a zero-sum game" with winners and losers. Instead, trade generates benefits to all participants and is "a positive-sum game." If the current trade war continues to escalate, he fears that companies such as Harley-Davidson and GM will leave the U.S. to set up shop abroad, leading to major domestic job losses. In Sheldon's view, tariffs are counterproductive and will have a negative impact on global GDP in 2019. He also fears the permanent loss of markets for U.S. products, e.g., soybeans. China has stopped buying soybeans from U.S. farmers altogether and is buying them from Brazil

and other countries instead of cultivating them domestically. According to Sheldon, the current U.S. trade policy "represents a serious threat to post-war multilateral consensus on trade rules of GATT and the WTO." While America may eventually be able to recover from the economic impact of the trade war, Sheldon – as well as Scherer – are worried about the long-term damage the trade war is doing to its relationship with Europe, Asia, and the rest of the world. Time will tell if the breach can be repaired or if it is irreparable.

### **"Delaware Ohio News" and OWU**

"Delaware Ohio News" is a satirical online outlet that frequently needles local and regional authorities and institutions, including Ohio Wesleyan University. The editor, "Ricardo Paye" (which may be a pseudonym), says he holds a degree in "Amusement Park Design" from OWU. OWU does not offer such a degree, but it is obvious that Paye is intimately familiar with many facets of the institution and may well have been enrolled at one time or another. If he ever graduated is another story. Maybe booze, drugs, and sex got in the way. In his musings, Paye frequently writes that these are things he was and perhaps still is obsessed with. (To learn more, visit [www.delawareohionews.com](http://www.delawareohionews.com).)

"Community Matters" has repeatedly featured "Delaware Ohio News" and has expressed appreciation of some of the quirky and inconvenient humor of the website. But a recent DON post may have gone too far and may have caused real harm to Ohio Wesleyan University. An article by "Nina Wilde" stated that after a fall visit by U.S. President Trump to Delaware County, OWU president Rock Jones ordered the removal of all international students from campus, effective Dec. 7, and would no longer accept them in the future.

According to DON's own website, "everything on this website is made up." Therefore, it states, "do not rely on anything said here." A legal disclaimer further explains, "all stories herein are parodies (satire, fiction, fake, not real) of people and/or actual events." To make a long story short, "Delaware Ohio News" is not a legitimate news source, and there is not one iota of truth in Nina Wilde's statement that OWU has banned international students from campus.

It is certainly true that President Trump has spoken of "a Muslim ban," of "closing the Mexican border," etc., and he has made no secret of his nativist preference to limit the number of non-white immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. However, Rock Jones has never made and will never make remarks to this effect. He is a vocal defender of the liberal arts and sees great value in inclusion and diversity.

Imagine foreign students in China, India, or Pakistan reading the misinformation contained on DON's platform and not knowing the context. They would automatically eliminate OWU and perhaps even all Ohio institutions of higher education from consideration. Fake news can result in real harm and injury. False information on Facebook, for instance, has led to deadly hate crimes in some parts of the world.

OWU faculty member Dr. Thomas Wolber left a reply at DON's platform which reads in part, "*Note that everything you read in this satirical publication is entirely made up, with little basis in reality. If you are a current or prospective international student at Ohio Wesleyan University, please rest assured that you are warmly welcome at the institution. The college has a significant number of diverse, multicultural students and values each and every one.*"

### **Pedestrian Safety Advice**

OWU's Public Safety recently issued the following common-sense guidelines to the student population. It also applies to Delaware as a whole.

*"Now that Daylight Saving Time has ended, it gets darker earlier at night, making it more challenging for motorists to see you. Please follow the pedestrian safety tips shared here.*

*Wear reflective clothing at night. For those walking in the dark, clothes with large reflective stripes are recommended. Drivers may not see you if you have only one or two small reflective patches on your clothing. Many backpacks and shoes also use reflective materials to add visibility.*

*Cross streets only at marked crosswalks or corners, and proceed only when the appropriate "walk" signal is displayed (if applicable). Be sure to push the "walk" activation buttons where available. At some intersections in the city, "walk" signals will be displayed only if activation buttons are pushed.*

*Look left, right, and left again before entering a crosswalk. Even if you have the right of way, check both ways to ensure that motorists see you and have stopped to allow you to cross.*

*Make eye contact with drivers whenever possible before crossing the street. Watch especially for vehicles that are turning or backing up. Walk quickly and purposefully as you cross streets.*

*Do not use headphones, text, or talk on the telephone as you walk. You should always be able to hear, see, and quickly respond to what is going on around you.*

*Be especially careful to look both ways when wearing a hooded jacket that covers your face and blocks your side vision."*

## DELAWARE COUNTY & CENTRAL OHIO

### DCDL Levy Renewal Passes

Delaware County District Library voters approved a 15-year, 1-mill renewal levy for operations and improvements by a vote of 42,640 (64.15%) to 23,823 (35.85%). Plans are now underway to build a larger library for fast-growing Powell within the next 2 years. – As state funding for libraries has significantly dropped in Ohio, local levies have become increasingly important. The good news is that voters love libraries and are willing to support them on Election Day. All but one of 25 library ballot issues in Ohio won voter approval on Nov. 6.

### Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities

On Nov. 6, Delaware County voters approved a new 0.4-mill property tax levy to raise \$3.1 million for operations & facilities. The vote was 56,395 (62.3%) to 34,171 (37.7%).

### Troy Balderson Wins 12<sup>th</sup> District

Republican Troy Balderson won Ohio's 12<sup>th</sup> District with 171,757 votes (51.6%) over Democrat Danny O'Connor who received 156,863 votes (47.1%). Green candidate Joe Manchik received 4,510 votes (1.35%).

### Delaware County Commissioner

Republican incumbent Barb Lewis defeated Democrat Aileen Wagner with 54,472 votes (61.1%) to 34,588 votes (38.9%).

### Delaware County Auditor

Republican incumbent George Kaitsa defeated Democrat Indu Rajan with 58,410 votes (65.2%) to 31,132 votes (34.8%).

### Powell's Income-Tax Levy Fails

Like Delaware, the City of Powell has a significant infrastructure problem. The current 0.75% income tax is inadequate to maintain and expand Powell's 120 miles of streets and curbs and 77 miles of storm sewers. However, on Nov. 6 a proposed new income-tax rate of 1.15%, up from 0.75%, was rejected by voters by a vote of 3,845 (59.3%) to 2,639 (40.7%), leaving the city in a bad spot. According to the Columbus Dispatch, surveys showed that Powell residents prioritized "expanded parks, extended bike trails, and other amenities" over streets and roads.

Delaware, too, is looking at another attempt to get a much-needed road levy passed. City Council held a special work session on Nov. 6, but it seems a consensus about the size, details, and timing of the levy is far away.

### Delaware County Agriculture Society

The Ohio Dept. of Agriculture (ODA) has advised the Delaware County Agricultural Society board that the election held on Nov. 13 is invalid and that a new election for board members will need to be conducted. The election will take place Thurs., Dec. 13 (6:30-8:30 am and 1-7 pm) at the log cabin of the Delaware County Fairgrounds, 236 Pennsylvania Ave.

### Seminary Hill Farm Offers Bread Program

MTSO's Seminary Hill Farm ended its regular community-supported agriculture (CSA) fall season on Nov. 2. However, it has now added a new service that will be in place from Thanksgiving to

Christmas. Residents can sign up for a bread program initiated by Sarah Black, who has 30 years of professional experience in bread-baking. Three artisanal breads were available for Thanksgiving. Additional types will be baked for Christmas. Information on selections, pre-orders & pickup times are posted online at [www.seminaryhillfarm.org](http://www.seminaryhillfarm.org).

### Delaware County Historical Society

At the annual meeting of the Delaware County Historical Society on Nov. 13, the following 6 persons were elected or reelected to 3-year terms, commencing in January of 2019: Brent Carson, Lynn Foreman, Susan Garrett, David Hejmanowski, Roger Koch, and James Mendenhall. Outgoing board members Ana Babiasz and Benny Shoults received thanks for their past service. Jack Hilborn is president of the group, Donna Meyer the executive director. – It is the mission of the DCHS to promote and sustain interest in the history of Delaware County through historical preservation and education. To learn more the DCHS and its various sites and programs, visit [www.delawareohiohistory.org](http://www.delawareohiohistory.org).



### Ohio to Erie Trail Nearer to Completion

The Ohio to Erie Trail (OTET) is a 326-mile paved recreational trail from Cincinnati on the Ohio River through Central Ohio to Cleveland at Lake Erie. In Delaware County, the trail extends from Galena to Sunbury and beyond. The OTET is mostly finished, but gaps remain here and there. With the acquisition of 3.7 miles of former railroad right-of-way in Sunbury and Trenton Township the trail is now closer to completion. The new portion will connect Delaware County with Knox County. Preservation Parks of Delaware County was able to purchase the property with help from a Clean Ohio Trails Fund grant, an Ohio Capital Improvement Award, and park-district money. Paving the trail may occur as early as 2020. The finished trail will have two lanes with a center line. To learn more about the OTET and to view an interactive map, visit [www.ohioerietrail.org](http://www.ohioerietrail.org).

In January of 2017, Sustainable Delaware Ohio submitted a lengthy letter of support of the project. Here is one paragraph from the document, highlighting the benefits of the Ohio to Erie Trail:

*"Dedicated bike trails or 'bike roads,' as some call them, offer multiple benefits. The trails promote human health and fitness. They enhance traffic safety by separating motorists from bicyclists. The trails also spur growth and development as eateries and motels pop up around them. Landscaped trails beautify the scenery, enhance property values, and help pollinators. People riding their bikes do not produce exhaust fumes and thus eliminate air pollution. Green space absorbs rain-water run-off and reduces summer heat, creating habitat for people, animals, and plants. Bicycle trails also alleviate traffic congestion, commuting delays, and parking headaches for others, thus benefiting everyone. Generally speaking, they provide more transportation options, contribute to the overall quality of life, and are often the source of pride and identity for local communities. It has also been stated that neighborhoods with dedicated bike lanes and bike trails are attractive to millennials and young professionals who have a more active lifestyle. Bike trails can also help revitalize urban and even rural communities. In short, bike trails and bike roads are excellent investments with a solid long-term payback. Once the OTET is complete, people will come from across the nation and perhaps the world to savor the experience."*

### Delaware County Bird Club

The Delaware County Bird Club meets once a month on Mondays, 6:30-8 pm, at Preservation Parks' Deer Haven Park, 4183 Liberty Rd. Anyone interested in birds is welcome. Each month will feature a different speaker covering birding topics. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., with the program beginning at 7 p.m.

December 10: Christmas Bird Count. Explore the rich history of the Christmas Bird Count, focusing on the count here in Delaware



County. The 31<sup>st</sup> annual Delaware Christmas Bird Count will be conducted Sun., Dec. 16.

**January 28:** Spring Migration in Texas. Join Tom Sheley on a quest to witness spring migrants and resident birds along the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.

**February 25:** Feather-Degrading Bacteria in the Tropics & More than Birds. College senior Kyle Davis will be discussing his quest to study feather-degrading bacteria in Costa Rica, while high school sophomore Adriana Losey will be sharing her experience at Camp Colorado and how birding can lead to new friendships.

### **All Life Center Is Now Marybrook**

The All Life Center at 123 Hyatts Rd. is now Marybrook ([www.marybrook.org](http://www.marybrook.org)). Earlier this year, the Center announced it would go into a new direction and that it would reopen this fall after a time of transition and renewal. There was talk about the center becoming a retreat and lodge for rent, but at this point it is still not clear what kind of programming the owners have in mind. The website is still under construction.

### **Sunbury Approves Amendment to Create Charter**

The Village of Sunbury hopes to be the City of Sunbury soon. On Nov. 6, voters approved 1,584 to 499 an amendment to create the necessary city charter, which will be written by residents once the population officially reaches and exceeds 5,000 at the 2020 census.

### **Route 42 South a Dangerous Drive**

On Nov. 10, Columbus Dispatch reporter Dean Narciso detailed how Route 42 South has become a busy and dangerous drive. The most accident-prone segment is the 5-mile stretch from Rt. 23 in Delaware to the county line. Since 1913, there have been 268 crashes. The most deadly segment is between the Delaware-Union county line and Route 33. There have been 3 fatalities since 2016. Near the Delaware-Union county line, there are about 14,000 vehicles per day, incl. many semis, that travel at high speed. Failure to yield and following too closely are two common reasons why motorists crash. Slow-moving farm equipment in that rural area is another problem. ODOT is studying the issue and is working on upgrading intersections, widening shoulders, and adding rumble strips, all slated for 2021.



### **New Aldi Store in Powell**

A new Aldi store has opened at 9965 Sawmill Parkway in Powell. The franchise is known for its cost-savings approaches and affordable products. Customers have to bag their own groceries, for example. Increasingly, however, Aldi also offers fresh, organic, and healthy produce, baked goods, meat, and dairy. The hours at the Powell store are M-F 9 am – 9 pm, on Saturday & Sundays 9 am – 8 pm. Delaware's Aldi store, which has the same hours, is located at 973 Sunbury Rd. (US 36/37 East).

The German-owned grocery chain Aldi currently has more than 1,800 stores in 35 U.S. states and plans to expand its presence to 2,500 stores by the end of 2022. Central Ohio, too, will add several more Aldi stores. Meanwhile, Lidl's expansion into the Midwest has stalled. A planned Lidl store in Delaware is on hold.

### **Planet Oasis Project Now in the Courts**

The battle over Planet Oasis has gone into a new phase. On Nov. 9, Blue Horseshoe Ventures and Tony Sekulovski filed a lawsuit in the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas against David Glimcher, the public face of the development project when it was first announced in June. The lawsuit alleges that Glimcher has committed "illegal actions" and "fraud." Tony & Alex Sekulovski are seeking a declaratory judgment that their company, Blue Horseshoe Ventures, holds all legal rights and obligations to pursue the 350-acre, \$2-billion project near I-71. – Earlier the same week, the City of Gahanna recognized Tony

Sekulovski and Blue Horseshoe Ventures as the rightful developer behind the proposed Hamilton Towne Centre project, after Glimcher failed to produce the necessary documentation.

### **Ben Shapiro at OSU**

An OSU student group, Young Americans for Freedom, invited former Breitbart editor Ben Shapiro, to come to Columbus and to speak on Nov. 13 at the Ohio Union. The student group stated that Shapiro is a "true conservative" and different from white supremacist Richard Spencer. The OSU administration, which assessed the situation, seemed to agree with that view. It did not expect a substantial safety risk, and granted permission despite the fact that Shapiro's appearances at other campuses around the nation required huge amounts in security outlays.

Who is Ben Shapiro? Born in 1984 to a Jewish family, he is a polarizing figure who often makes disparaging remarks about minorities. At OSU, he focused on the role of government. He told the crowd that the purpose of government is to protect life, liberty, and property, not to provide services such as education, housing, health care, and welfare. In his view, these are not "legitimate" goals of government. It should not have to fix problems in any of these areas. Taken to their logical conclusion, Shapiro's extreme proposals would of course lead to enormous inequities in society.

Earlier on Nov. 16, Shapiro spoke at the Ohio Statehouse in favor of House Bill 758, which protects free speech at colleges and universities. As designed, the bill would include the protection of hate speech, which is problematic.

### **Nancy Jeffrey (1930-2018)**

Nancy Jeffrey, the Columbus philanthropist, died on Nov. 8 at the age of 88. She was born in 1930 in the State of New York, but followed her Ohio-born husband, Robert "Tad" H. Jeffrey (1929-2016), to Columbus in 1956. He was a well-known businessman and philanthropist. Nancy Jeffrey was active in numerous social causes, including mental-health issues and homelessness. She served as president of the United Way of Central Ohio and helped found ADAMH (the Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Board) and the Community Shelter Board. Her obituary also notes her leadership in the Columbus Foundation, Metropolitan Human Services Commission, Capital South Urban Redevelopment Corporation, Action for Children, Columbus & Franklin County Housing Commission, Columbus School for Girls, OSU, Harding Hospital, and others. Jeffrey believed in the dignity and worth of each individual and recently funded the creation of the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park in downtown Columbus. For nearly 60 years, Nancy Jeffrey was an exemplary community advocate & activist. She will be laid to rest in a private green burial at Green Lawn Cemetery, 1000 Greenlawn Ave.

## **STATE OF OHIO**



### **Mike DeWine Is Ohio's Next Governor**

Republican Mike DeWine won against Democrat Richard Cordray with a 4.2 percentage-point win in the Nov. 6 elections. He will be sworn in as Ohio's 70<sup>th</sup> governor on Jan. 14, 2019.

In an interview with the Columbus Dispatch, DeWine, 71, laid out some of his priorities. He spoke of a sense of urgency to begin tackling the state's opioid epidemic. He mentioned early childhood education, K-12 schools, and job training. In addition, he acknowledged the need of local authorities for more financial aid, after years of cuts. He also promised to deal with criminal-justice reform, but offered no details. Critics of DeWine say that the Ohio GOP had years to make progress in these four areas, but failed to do so. They

have no hope that retrograde Ohio will make meaningful progress in the foreseeable future either.

What DeWine did not talk about in the interview with the Dispatch is also revealing. There was no mention of renewable energy, climate change, infrastructure, higher education, gerrymandering, campaign-finance reform, voting rights, women's rights, LGBT rights, or gun control. DeWine is personally opposed to abortion and same-sex marriage. There was also no statement promising an end to the culture of corruption (e.g., Cliff Rosenberger) that has plagued Ohio and tainted its reputation.

Given DeWine's background & biography, it is almost certain that the State of Ohio will not be entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century anytime soon.

### **No Speaker of the House Yet**

Ohio House Democrats have voted to keep Fred Strahorn, D-Dayton, as minority leader. Republicans, on the other hands, have been unable to settle for either Ryan Smith or Larry Householder as House Speaker. The two remain locked in a bitter battle over who will lead the General Assembly in January. Smith enjoys a plurality of votes, but lacks the required 50 votes in the 61-member caucus. Without a designated speaker in place, planning for the future is difficult. It also reinforces the public perception that there is a lack of unity among Ohio Republicans.

### **Issue 1 Defeated**

State Issue 1 was intended to help people suffering from substance abuse find treatment instead of sticking them into prisons. It would have reduced prison sentences in favor of rehabilitative programs and community service. Ohio sheriffs, prosecutors, and judges, however, did not like to see their discretion reduced and launched an aggressive and expensive counterattack on a massive scale. Fearing for their revenues, both Delaware County and the City of Delaware issued political and partisan statements against Issue 1. "Community Matters" has acquired quite an interesting collection of letters, articles, flyers, and posters full of apocalyptic fear-mongering. Unknown people carpet-bombed even Ohio Wesleyan University prior to Nov. 6. As a result, Issue 1 failed to gain enough votes. 63.4% voted no, 36.6% voted yes. – Even though the measure failed, law enforcement has taken notice that federal criminal-justice reform, bail reform, and prison reform is coming to the state sooner or later. The current criminal-justice system is an unsustainable quasi-feudal regime that permits incarceration, forced labor, voter disenfranchisement, minority segregation, oppression of free speech, and so on. It is time for this abominable dystopia to be modernized and humanized.

### **House Republicans Approve Stand-Your-Ground Bill**

On Nov. 14, the Ohio House approved HB 228 with a vote of 64-24. HB eliminates the duty to retreat before using deadly force in self-defense situations. It also reduces penalties for carrying a gun in prohibited areas, incl. public colleges & universities, and forbids cities from enacting gun ordinances. The proposed bill will now go to the Senate.

Cleveland Democrat Stephanie Howse, president of the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus, pointed out that the bill would have a disparate impact on people of color, but House Speaker Ryan Smith, a white man, rudely cut her off, shut her microphone down, and called for an immediate vote. The "Columbus Dispatch" noted on 11/16, "Smith will not serve Ohio well if he continues to employ such a quick trigger finger on the gavel."

### **Ohio House Passes Heartbeat Bill**

The next day, on Nov. 15, the Ohio House passed the controversial "Heartbeat Bill." It bans abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected, which is normally the case after 6 to 7 weeks of pregnancy. A Democratic attempt to create an exception for rape or incest was blocked by Republicans. The current bill allows no exceptions for anyone, incl. for girls as young as age 12. A woman's mental health also does not qualify as grounds for an exemption. Physicians who violate the ban would go to jail for up to one year. The House approved the legislation by a vote of 59 to 35. Governor Kasich vetoed a similar bill a year ago and has vowed to do so again, but this time the House may have the 60 votes required to override his veto. Ohio's legislators pay little regard to the lame-duck governor anymore.

Mike DeWine will take over for Kasich on Jan. 14, and he is fully aboard with the GOP's right-wing agenda. He has said that he would sign the heartbeat bill.

The bill is a piece of extreme and probably unconstitutional legislation, but conservatives are increasingly confident that the landmark Roe v. Wade abortion decision will be overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in the foreseeable future. It is by no means "settled law." People who tell you so are either misinformed or deliberately spreading false knowledge.

### **Ohio House Bans Plastic-Bag Fees**

Pushed by a coalition of major plastic-bag manufacturers (the American Progressive Bag Alliance), Ohio lawmakers passed a bill that prohibits the imposition of local fees on single-use shopping bags made of plastic. House Bill 625 also outlaws fees for "auxiliary containers" made of cardboard, plastic, metal, glass, and so on. The bill follows the template provided by the corporate-backed American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). The goal is "to protect our business-friendly environment in Ohio," according to Rep. Scott Lipps, R-Franklin, a prime sponsor. Several conservative states have enacted similar laws. No Ohio city or county has so far imposed a bag fee, but some are mulling it over. The legislation is a preemptive move to stop local officials from enacting bans or fees on the bags in the future. Ohio is constitutionally a home-rule state that grants municipalities "all powers of local self-government" (Article XVIII, §8), but under the influence of lobbyists legislators have violated this principle for years, fracking and guns being prominent examples.

Americans use about 100 billion plastic bags per year. Some are recycled, but most end up in landfills where it takes them up to 1,000 years to disintegrate. Many blow into fields and woods, storm drains and lakes. Plastic pollution has become a major problem across the globe. The majority of trash found in nature and along roads consists of plastic.

### **Ohio GOP Is Fighting Constitutional Amendments**

Republicans clearly do not like the fact that Ohio voters can place grass-roots issues on the ballot and change the state's constitution. Issue 1, intended to reduce mass incarceration, was the last straw for them. Now they want to make it harder to get constitutional amendments on the ballot. Possible ways to do this is to institute a 60% approval from voters (e.g., Florida), requiring more than one round of voting (e.g., Nevada), or increase the number of required signatures from currently 306,000. Ironically, any constitutional amendment GOP lawmakers pass would require a constitutional amendment on the ballot.

Critics say there is nothing wrong with the process. They point out that lawmakers frequently ignore voters' concerns (e.g., over payday lenders) and that ballots are sometimes the only way to get them to listen. The League of Women Voters, for instance, says that "citizens need to have the ability to make policy happen when they're not seeing it out of the state legislature." House Minority Leader Fred Strahorn, D-Dayton, maintains that the process is working the way it's supposed to. Putting undue barriers in front of people is undemocratic, he says.

### **Jim Jordan Voted Out as Minority Leader**

Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, the face of Congress' Freedom Caucus, wanted to be minority leader of the House Republicans next year. However, many considered his campaign a hopeless quixotic quest. In the end, on Nov. 14 Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California won the vote 159 to 43. He will take over for Paul Ryan in January. McCarthy thrives on human interaction and has been an excellent fundraiser. Jordan's style, on the other hand, has always been aggressive, adversarial, and uncompromising. "He has never been a team player," according to a Republican adviser on Capitol Hill. Former House Speaker John Boehner has labeled him a "legislative terrorist." Jordan has left of lengthy trail of angry GOP leaders in his wake who will never vote for him and his ilk. In addition, there are accusations against Jordan of having ignored complaints by OSU wrestlers of sexual assault committed by their team doctor, Richard Strauss – accusations which Jordan denies.

Jordan was also prevented from becoming chair of the House Judiciary Committee. In a surprise move, however, he became the top Republican on the House Oversight Committee. With

Democrats taking over the House in January, Jordan's job will be to be President Trump's bulldog against investigations and impeachment.

### **Populous Counties Need More Early-Voting Centers**

Ohio state law permits only one early-voting site per county. This is not an unreasonable policy if the county's population is small. However, the arbitrary rule makes no sense when applied to Ohio's largest population centers. Franklin County, for instance, has 532 square miles and a population of 1.26 million, but is prohibited from opening a second or third early-voting center. Northland at 1700 Morse Rd. is the only early-voting site. It is not rocket science to discover that people living closer to Northland visit the site more often than people who live farther away. Only 3.7% of the people living in Grove City on the far south side of Columbus traveled to Northland in 2018 compared to 57% of the adjacent Columbus Precinct 42-B. One single location for all of Franklin County does not make voting accessible, convenient, and easy for many people. Factoring in race, it becomes quickly clear that the policy has the (intentional or unintentional) effect of reducing the ability of minority voters to fully participate in the democratic process. Catherine Turcer from Common Cause Ohio, a watchdog group, says that the state should be treating voters equally, instead of treating counties equally.

### **Sherrod Brown for President?**

Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown easily defeated his Republican challenger in the Nov. 6 midterms. He was the most successful Democratic politician in a state that has turned thoroughly red and voted for Trump in 2016. There is now increased speculation about Brown, 66, running for president in 2020. No doubt it will be a very crowded field on the Democratic side, but there are people who say that Brown's approach in Ohio might serve as a useful blueprint or template for other Democrats in red and purple states. "I respect the dignity of work, and I think that's what Washington forgets about," Brown stated on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." He says about the presidential race that "we are thinking about it for the first time seriously."

### **John Kasich Visits New Hampshire**

In November, Ohio Governor John Kasich was once again spotted in New Hampshire where he was photographed kissing babies – a sure sign that he is thinking about running for president in 2020. Many people consider his candidacy to be a fool's errand, but Kasich himself believes there is a path forward. He says, "there's a big ocean in the middle" that he can tap into. He feels he is the man who can overcome the nation's polarization and end the chaos. Maybe so. Unfortunately for him, few people in Ohio share his optimism. He has given up on Ohio long ago, and Ohioans have given up on him. In addition, the list of prospective Democratic and Republican candidates who have visited New Hampshire this year is a mile long.

### **The Press and Libel Laws in Ohio**

The folks behind "Community Matters" recently read through the "Constitution of the State of Ohio" and made all kinds of interesting discoveries. Legal documents can be fascinating, including the "Constitution of the United States." We may tackle the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) next! Below is what Ohio's constitution says in Article 1, § 11 about freedom of speech and libel. It's good to know that the Constitution of the State of Ohio protects the free and unabridged pursuit of truth at all times and in all cases.

*"Every citizen may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of the right; and no law shall be passed to restrain or abridge the liberty of speech, or of the press. In all criminal prosecutions for libel, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury, and if it shall appear to the jury, that the matter charged as libelous is true, and was published with good motives, and for justifiable ends, the party shall be acquitted."*



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

### **Call Before You Dig!**

Before any excavation project, call Ohio Utilities Protection Services (OUPS) at 811 at least two business days before digging. A representative will mark the approximate location of underground utility lines for you. The service is free.

### **Ohio's Drug Problem**

A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists Ohio as the state with the second-highest rate of drug overdose deaths. In 2017, there were 4,854 unintentional drug-related deaths. Federal statistics reported 5,111 drug deaths in Ohio because also include intentional drug-related deaths such as suicide or homicide. Nearly three-thirds were killed by fentanyl. According to the CDC, Ohio's death rate was 46.3 per 100,000 people last year, eclipsed only by West Virginia with 57.8 per 100,000 people. The national rate is 21.7 per 100,000 people, up from 19.8 in 2016. Across the U.S., 70,234 persons died of drug overdoses in 2017, a new record. Ohio lawmakers say they are aggressively working on the problem. Some progress has been made in the area of prescribed drugs. However, illicit street drugs keep killing people by the thousands. Whatever strategy authorities are pursuing, they are not working. Arresting and incarcerating people for their addiction is no solution for the root causes.

### **Cuyahoga County Jail**

Following the deaths of 6 inmates last summer, the Cuyahoga County Jail in Cleveland was reviewed by the U.S. Marshals Service. The report detailed how the jail fell far short of federal standards. It noted that the understaffed jail kept incarcerated individuals in inhumane conditions, sometimes failing to provide proper food, toilet paper, and health-care basics. It also locked up juveniles in the same unit as adults. In addition, jail officials made no effort to investigate or document what led to the deaths of the 6 inmates between June and October. The situation was so bad that a Cleveland municipal judge refused to send any more non-violent offenders to the county jail. The former director, Ken Mills, abruptly resigned just before the release of the review. Authorities promised to address the problems and "a comprehensive plan." The problem with comprehensive plans is, of course, that it takes months and years to develop, approve, and implement them. – Certain people will say that the Cuyahoga County Jail was an outlier, an anomaly, a rogue facility. Not so. There are deep structural and systemic problems in all U.S. jails and prisons. Perhaps the long-overdue bipartisan criminal-justice reform that has been in the news recently will address some of these issues, but don't hold your breath. (More on that topic in the next edition of "Community Matters.")

### **Grim Outlook for Ohio Farmers**

The outlook for Ohio's 75,000 farmers is not rosy. There is no end in sight for the trade war with China, which has stopped buying soybeans from the U.S. altogether. Farmers have a hard time finding buyers for their agricultural products. They are stockpiling them in grain bags that are 200 or 300 feet long and will be planting 9 million fewer acres of soy next year. There is a chance that the U.S. will permanently lose market share to Brazil and other countries. The USDA has made some financial help available for impacted farmers, but those 82 cents a bushel are not enough to make them whole. At the moment, the cost of production exceeds revenues. Farmers are likely to need a similar, but much bigger second round of payments in 2019, possibly in the amount of \$10 billion. However, at this point nothing has been decided. The squeeze is expected to put many farmers out of business. "You can't pay the bills with patriotism," said one producer.

### **Ohio Treasury Accepts Bitcoins**

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel has announced that Ohio is now accepting Bitcoin to pay taxes. That makes Ohio the first state in the nation to do so. At this point, Bitcoin is the only cryptocurrency that's being accepted, but Mandel's office says it would like to add others in the future. – Not everyone is convinced that this is a wise idea. Bitcoin is not legal tender. In the past, governments have stayed away from Bitcoin, in part because of the high risks and volatility involved. In the last year, Bitcoin has lost about 80% of the value and is down from just under \$20,000 to \$4,000. An astute reader of the "Columbus

Dispatch" noted that Bitcoin is not trackable and wrote, "while Mandel says he has no stock in Bitcoin himself, better check his supporters and others funding his political ambitions."

### **Druidry in Central Ohio**

Druidry is a neo-pagan religion based on ancient Celtic values and practices. Modern Druid fellowship is primarily about a connection with nature, a relationship with the spiritual world, and living a virtuous life. In Druidry, Earth and nature are sacred and must be honored and protected. Polluting the planet would be a grave transgression against the natural order and spirits. Not coincidentally, Druidry is essentially a faith that is practiced in the great outdoors. Here is an official ADF statement concerning "nature worship": *"We believe that it is necessary to have respect and love for Nature as divine in Her own right, and to accept ourselves as part of Nature and not Her 'rulers.' Many of us accept what has come to be known as 'the Gaia hypothesis,' that the biosphere of our planet is a living being, to whom is due all the love and support that we, Her children, can give. We consider ecological awareness and activism to be sacred duties."*

Neo-pagan religions are enjoying increasing popularity and acceptance. Environmentalists, women, and millennials are particularly interested in empowerment and in reconnecting with ancient wisdom and chthonian forces. A Pew Research Center survey in 2014 yielded 734,000 Americans who self-identified as Wiccans, Pagans (or "Heathens"), or Druids. Many are secret and solitary practitioners of their faith, but according to the New York Times there are nearly 80 covens and pagan organizations that operate in the Big Apple alone.

Three Cranes Coven, ADF is a Druid congregation based in Columbus. Part of an international network of Druids (A Druid Fellowship / ADF), the coven celebrates 8 public rituals each year, incl. Ostara, the spring celebration, and Samhain, which marks the Druid new year in October. Anywhere from 30 to 60 people attend the meetings. The annual service at the Dublin Irish Festival draws almost 300. True to their beliefs, the Three Cranes Coven does not do any animal or blood sacrifices. The regional coven will host its next public ritual, the Yule Rite, on Sun., Dec. 16 (2:30-5 pm) at Blacklick Woods Metro Golf at 7309 E. Livingston Ave. in Reynoldsburg. For more info, visit [www.threecranes.org](http://www.threecranes.org).

### **Fraternity Pledge at Ohio University Dies**

18-year-old freshman Collin Wiant from Dublin died Dec. 10 in Athens, Ohio. He was found, intoxicated and unresponsive, at an off-campus annex owned by the Epsilon chapter of Sigma Pi fraternity at Ohio University. OU shut down the chapter the next day. Sigma Pi's national parent organization supported the step and urged its members to cooperate fully with local law enforcement.

Problems with fraternities are widespread in the U.S. Binge drinking, drug use & sales, hazing, sexual assault, injuries, littering, racism, and academic underperformance are some of associated issues. Some colleges and universities, such as Denison University, have permanently banned fraternities to ensure students stay focused on the educational mission. Other institutions however, including OU, continue to have a reputation for being "party schools." Ohio Wesleyan is generally supportive of fraternities, but does suspend them when they misbehave.

### **Arrests Made in 2016 Rhoden Massacre**

Authorities have finally made arrests on the gruesome massacre of 8 members of the Rhoden family in southern Ohio more than two years ago. Arrested were 4 members of the Wagner family. Edward "Jake" Wagner was once the long-time boyfriend of one of the victims, Hanna Rhoden, with whom he shared custody of their daughter. The Wagners used to live in Peebles, Ohio, but later moved to Alaska before relocating back to Ohio. An official motive for the killings has yet to be announced, but there is evidence that paternity and custody questions played a role in the killings.

## **THE NATION**

### **George H. W. Bush (1924-2018)**

George H. Walker Bush, the 41<sup>st</sup> U.S. president (1989-93), died Nov. 30 at age 94. His wife of 73 years, Barbara Bush, passed

away April 17. They are the parents of George W. Bush, the 43<sup>rd</sup> president (2001-09).

### **A New Climate-Change Report**

A new report on climate change, released Nov. 23, concludes that unless decisive steps are taken to rein in global warming, the damage could shrink the American economy by as much as 10%. Thirteen federal agencies participated in the 1,656-page document, the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume in the National Climate assessment report mandated by Congress. The report focuses on the economic damage resulting from climate change and lays out the financial consequences in great detail. Climate-change events (e.g., heat, drought, fires, floods, and disease) are expected to significantly disrupt agricultural productivity in the U.S. In the area of trade, climate change will negatively impact production, distribution, supply chains, and foreign consumer markets. The report also puts exact price tags on the cost to the economy – for example, \$141 billion from heat-related deaths, \$118 billion from sea-level rise, and \$32 billion from infrastructure damage.

The authors are suggesting 3 main possible solutions: a price on greenhouse-gas emissions, establishing strict federal regulations on emissions, and spending public money on clean-energy research and projects. There is, of course, a remarkable disconnect between the findings of the report and the current Trump administration. The president, the GOP, and the fossil-fuel industry have declared man-made climate change and global warming a hoax and will not move one finger to combat it. They are doing everything they can to roll back common-sense protections to reduce emissions and air pollution. When asked about the very thorough and detailed report, President Trump responded, "I don't believe it."

### **An Independent Judiciary**

Supreme Court Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., 63, is a cautious man who has avoided open confrontation with President Trump. He has been silent on numerous occasions when Trump questioned the character and impartiality of federal judges. However, on Nov. 21 Roberts felt compelled to speak up and defend the independence and integrity of the federal judiciary. In a statement released on the day before Thanksgiving he said, "we don't have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges. What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them. That independent judiciary is something we should all be thankful for."

Later that day, Trump repeated his condemnation of "Obama judges." He has also publicly suggested to break up the Ninth Circuit of Appeals Circuit, which includes California, into 2 or 3 smaller circuits. He has said that the Ninth Circuit is "a big thorn in our side" and that he does not appreciate judges telling him "how to protect the border," as he put it. It is clear that President Trump is no friend of an independent judiciary. He wants judges who are obedient and will do his bidding. He wants to be the master to whom they must submit. He has made it obvious that he accepts the legal supremacy of the judiciary only in cases where judges side with him. There are now countless examples where he has attempted to undermine the basic concept that Lady Justice must always be blind, impartial, and fair to everyone. He has also demanded that the Justice Dept. and the Supreme Court take up certain cases and/or expedite them on the behalf of himself, his family, and his businesses. It is clear to many that Trump does not have a clear and full understanding of the separation between the executive and judiciary branches of government.

The Chief Justice's gentle rebuke highlights a growing rift and clash between the executive and judicial branches of the government, personified by Trump and Roberts. It could well be a watershed moment and turning point for the nation. Ross Douthat of the New York Times even spoke of recent incidences as "harbingers of the Republic's eventual end." Unfortunately, history is replete with autocratic rulers who attempted to bend the justice system to their will. When push comes to shove, a Supreme Court's legal authority rarely withstands the naked executive power of an imperial ruler. More than 200 years ago, the American Declaration of Independence criticized the British king of wanting to make "judges dependent on his will alone." Roberts is right to point out the dangers of unconstitutional

government interference and overreach. An independent, co-equal judiciary is an essential and necessary pillar for any democracy.

### **Judge Restores Jim Acosta's Press Credentials**

In November, Jim Acosta from CNN temporarily lost his White House press badge when President Trump retaliated against the journalist for asking probing questions. On Nov. 16, a federal judge restored Acosta's press credentials citing a lack of due administrative process and the absence of the right to appeal. The judge, Timothy J. Kelly, also criticized the White House for its false claim that Acosta had somehow made inappropriate arm movements. Judge Kelly noted, however, that his narrow ruling was not about whether the First Amendment was violated in this case. He is an appointee of President Trump. – The case symbolized the difficult relationship between Trump and the media, routinely referred to as "the enemy of the people" by the president. It also highlighted the fact that access to the White House is not an irrevocable First Amendment right, as is widely believed. Instead, the privilege relies on custom rather than a legal framework. The White House announced that it would soon create tougher benchmarks based on "respect" and "decorum" that would allow it to ban inconvenient journalists in the future. Critics of the Trump administration called it an attempt to undermine the freedom of the press and a threat to democracy.

### **Trump Fires Jeff Sessions**

One day after the midterm elections (Nov. 6), President Trump fired his attorney general, Jeff Sessions. Trump never forgave him for recusing himself from the Russia investigation in 2017. It was no secret that he wanted to get rid of Sessions, and he attacked him relentlessly. Sessions will be replaced by Sessions' chief of staff, Matthew G. Whitaker, who will serve as interim AG. Whitaker is considered a Trump loyalist, which throws the future of the Russia investigation by Robert Mueller into doubt. In a 2017 interview, Whitaker suggested a scenario in which Mueller's budget would be reduced "so low that his investigation grinds almost to a halt." – Democrats have demanded that Whitaker refrain from any interference and recuse himself from the Russia investigation.

### **Andrew Wheeler May Become EPA Head**

President Donald Trump has tapped Ohio native Andrew R. Wheeler to replace Scott Pruitt as EPA chief. Wheeler was born in Hamilton and has a B.A. degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. He worked for coal magnate Robert E. Murray and as lobbyist against President Obama's environmental regulations. A close collaborator of prominent Oklahoma climate-change denier James Inhofe, with whom he worked for over a decade, Wheeler is a critic of the IPCC and of limits on greenhouse-gas emissions. He has been acting chair of the EPA since July 2018 and has been instrumental in rolling back environmental regulations of the Obama era. Wheeler's approach has been low-key, methodical, relentless, and efficient. – Environmentalists condemned Trump's choice and promised a tough confirmation battle in the Senate. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, also expressed his disappointment and said he has seen no evidence that Wheeler is committed to protecting Lake Erie and the many jobs that depend on it.

### **Militias at the Mexican Border**

Trigger-happy private militias, minutemen, and vigilantes have heard President Trump's siren song and, feeling empowered, have taken up arms to defend the Mexican border against incoming "caravans" of migrants. The prospect of unregulated, unlicensed, and unsupervised militia groups is unsettling not only to local landowners and communities but also to Army commanders. Supposedly, the heavily armed militias will only "observe and report," using aerial drones, night-vision goggles, spotlights, and trained dogs. However, misunderstandings and the eruption of violent incidents are always a distinct possibility, including clashes between the Army and the vigilantes. The Army has also stated that it also fears the theft of equipment.

Participation in private militias, vigilante groups, and sheriff's posses is at an all-time high, according to the Anti-Defamation League. Some militias say they are not racist hate groups and not linked to neo-Nazi or white supremacist groups, but others have admitted that they are preparing for a race war. In any case, paramilitary militias of

this kind set a dangerous precedent. What if these armed forces decide to self-deploy around polling stations, newspapers or college campuses, party headquarters and synagogues, as Adolf Hitler's Sturmabteilung (SA) once did? What if they decide to act independently and cleanse the nation of foreigners, Muslims, Hispanics, Jews, Blacks, LGBT folks, and so on? Private militias are "dangerous to liberty," says the Constitution of the State of Ohio. They should not be in the business of waging war against supposed "enemies of the people." These militants are potential terrorists and should be treated as such.

### **Controversy over Louis Farrakhan**

The Women's March is scheduled to return to Washington, D.C. on Jan. 19. However, organizers are currently struggling with the question of how to deal with Louis Farrakhan, the 85-year-old black leader of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Farrakhan holds views that many abhor. He has made racist, sexist, homophobic, and anti-Semitic remarks condemned by mainstream organizations. In addition, he has embraced Scientology and Dianetics. Supporters and allies of the Women's March have gone so far as to demand the removal of national leaders Bob Bland, Tamika Mallory, Carmen Perez, and Linda Sarsour. Both Mallory and Perez have praised Farrakhan, and Sarsour has participated in an event with him. The four say they and their organization are not responsible for Farrakhan's views and words. This is true. However, giving him a platform to voice his warped ideology lends him credibility, amplifies his influence, and does make them culpable.

### **The Story of Mia Love**

In 2014, Ludmya ("Mia") Love became the first black Republican woman ever elected to either chamber of Congress. For four years, she represented Utah's 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Congress. Today, however, she is gone, and there will be just two black Republican men left in Congress – one in the House and one in the Senate. Of the 9 new African-American lawmakers entering Congress in January 2019, not one of them is a Republican. Only one of at least 36 incoming female lawmakers is a member of the Republican Party.

What happened? There was a time when the Republican Party conducted an "autopsy" and welcomed women and minorities into their ranks. That included Mia Love, a daughter of Haitian immigrants who in 2010 became the mayor of Saratoga Springs, Utah. She was prominently featured at the 2012 Republican National Convention. Today, that seems an eternity ago. More than ever the GOP is the party of white men where minorities and women are unwelcome and receive little support. "Republicans never take minority communities into their homes and into their hearts," Mia Love, a convert to the Mormon Church, recently said in a speech. She also criticized Republicans for having a "transactional" relationship with minority voters.

"Community Matters" does not endorse Mia Love's conservative economic, social, and cultural positions, but she is right in one major respect. Unless the GOP chooses a different path and becomes more inclusive and diverse, the party is doomed.

### **Fox News in Cahoots with President Trump**

Fox News has abandoned all pretense to be a "fair and balanced" platform. On Nov. 5, host Sean Hannity appeared on the campaign stage together with President Trump, who gave him a warm bro-hug. His Fox News colleague Jeanine Pirro was also on the stage that night in Missouri. By taking part in the rally, Hannity and Fox News crossed the line that has traditionally separated the news media from politics. The news-media outlet and the executive branch of the government have merged to the point where it is impossible to tell where the news ends and opinion begins. Truth and lies have become indistinguishable. There is now zero daylight between Fox News and President Trump. As a result, the legitimacy of Fox News is severely compromised to the point where it can no longer be seen as a credible news source.

### **Will Nancy Pelosi Be the Next Speaker?**

Democrats won a comfortable majority of seats in the House of Representatives, but who will be the next speaker? Nancy Pelosi, 78, is backed by 203 Democrats, but she needs 218 votes on the House floor on Jan. 3 to be elected speaker. No Republican is expected

to back her, so there is currently a lot of maneuvering going on. Pelosi is trying hard to win over skeptics by striking deals with them and offering them influential positions (e.g., Joyce Beatty & Marcia Fudge of Ohio). To some extent, her tactics have worked, but a significant number of Democrats remain opposed. They ran on the promise of not supporting Pelosi and continue to believe that the Democratic Party needs new leadership. Pelosi is strong and tenacious and is expected to win the battle. However, it would be a grave mistake for Nancy Pelosi, Stan Hoyer, Jim Clyburn, Hillary Clinton, and other senior leaders to hang around too long and block the path of younger, more diverse, and more charismatic leaders.

### **Hillary Clinton Rejects Refugees**

In an interview with the British newspaper The Guardian, published Nov. 22, Hillary Clinton sharply spoke out against migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Migration is what "lit the flame" of right-wing populism and Brexit, she stated. Europe should send a very clear message that "we are not going to be able to continue to provide refuge and support" to migrants.

Her remarks drew shock, surprise, and criticism from perplexed people in Europe and America. How could she mimic the far right, which views immigration as a societal "threat"? How could she use their playbook? Had she misspoken? Had she been misunderstood? That does not seem to be the case. The more likely explanation is that her "conversion" is part of a deliberate and cynical calculus to position herself for another presidential run in 2020. The topic of immigration is a divisive one in the U.S. and has been politicized and weaponized by the GOP for years. A harder line on immigration might help make her more electable among white voters. Unfortunately, Clinton's interview provides legitimacy to right-wing nativists, xenophobes, and racists and makes her voice almost indistinguishable from that of President Trump. Far-right parties in Europe and America quickly embraced her viewpoint and celebrated her as one of their own. That makes Hillary Clinton complicit.

The topic of immigrants is indeed a vexing challenge for the world. Persecution, war, drought, famine, and climate change are likely to increase in the foreseeable future, but there is no global plan in place. "America First" or "Europe First" are not viable strategies because they do not address the root causes of the problem. The phenomenon of migrants is a symptom, not a cause. Demonizing and scapegoating refugees and asylum seekers is a mean and irresponsible cheap shot and a craven betrayal of America's tradition and liberal values. With her controversial and misguided remarks, Hillary Clinton has revealed her true colors and disqualified herself from any further consideration as a leader of the free world. She is badly out of step not only with the new Democratic Party that values inclusion and diversity, but also with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to seek asylum in other countries.

What should be done instead? The question needs to be asked why refugees and asylum seekers leave their home countries in the first place. Of course, civilians will attempt to flee war-ravaged countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, etc. Instead of building border walls and space forces, Europe and America should help improve the conditions in these distressed countries to ensure that their citizens are safe, have work, and remain healthy.

### **Prison Fees Called Illegal Tax**

In Michigan and other states (incl. Ohio), local governments collect millions of dollars of fees from prison inmates to feed and house them and for other purposes. An alliance of defense attorneys and judges are now calling these mandatory fees unconstitutional and an illegal tax. Some judges have said that they feel pressured by their cities or counties to reach certain quotas & financial targets or face consequences, including cuts in staff. They maintain that financial considerations should not enter into deliberations whether or not an accused person is innocent or guilty of a crime.

On 11/19, the Michigan Supreme Court heard a dispute over the issue. Governor Rick Snyder and the Michigan legislature want to see the money keep flowing because it provides budget relief. Their position is supported by the Attorney General's office and by prosecutors. The case will have major ramifications across the nation. Sadly, the criminal-justice system has become a billion-dollar industry in America, leading to mass incarceration. Ethical considerations about

fairness, equity, race, treatment, rehabilitation, the destruction of families, and the fraying of society are typically ignored.

### **Two Good Guys with a Gun**

What happens when "a good guy with a gun" meets another "good guy with a gun"? In the southern Chicago suburb of Robbins, 26-year-old security guard Jemel Roberson, 26, was busy detaining a suspected shooter at Manny's Blue Room bar when a white police officer shot and killed him. Jemel Roberson, who wore clothing that identified him as security, was black. Police Chief Daniel Delaney of the Midlothian Police Dept. has so far refused to release the name of his police officer. In a similar case, Emeric Fitzgerald ("EF") Bradford, who is black, pulled out a gun to protect customers after a shooter opened fire in an Alabama shopping mall. A white police officer spotted him, assumed he was the shooter, and killed him. Bradford was licensed to carry a firearm. The real perpetrator remains at large.

In chaotic situations, especially at night, it is difficult to differentiate between "good guys" and "bad guys." Police officers may shoot at anyone with a gun or what appears to be a gun, regardless of who the individuals are. Sometimes, their victims are officers from other law-enforcement agencies, private security guards, or armed civilians. "A good guy with a gun," the type of person the NRA lionizes, is at an elevated risk of being shot at and killed by the hands of police.

### **Motel 6 Settles Lawsuit**

In violation of consumer-protection laws, multiple Motel 6 locations in several U.S. states handed their guest lists to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents on a daily basis. ICE agents would then circle names that looked Latino-sounding and ran those through the database, resulting in the arrest of some people. Motel 6 has admitted wrongdoing, but said it was not corporate policy and that senior staff was unaware of the practice. The hotel chain now settled a lawsuit filed by MALDEF, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund for \$7.6 million. If approved by a federal judge in Arizona, anyone who had their information shared with no repercussions will receive \$50; anyone who was questioned by authorities as a result will receive \$1,000; and anyone who was placed in deportation proceedings will receive no less than \$7,500. In addition, Motel 6 agreed to tighten controls to protect private information. A separate lawsuit filed by Washington State is still pending.

### **U.S. Life Expectancy Keeps Falling**

In a troubling report released on Nov. 28, the CDC found that U.S. life expectancy fell to 78.6 years in 2017. Tens of thousands of Americans die of drug overdoses, suicides, tobacco, alcoholism, gun violence, and other preventable causes each year. For example, 70,237 people died of drug overdoses last year. – In 1960, the U.S. had the highest life-expectancy rate in the world, but it has lost ground to other industrialized nations ever since.

### **Cellphones Linked to Cancer**

The world's longest and costliest study on malignant gliomas, by the National Toxicology Program, has found evidence that the link between cellphone radiation and brain tumors is real. The study started during the Clinton administration, involved some 3,000 rodents (rats and mice), and cost \$30 million. Rodents were exposed to radiation at 900 megahertz, a frequency typical of cellphones in the 1990s. Within 2 years, some 2 to 3% of rats exposed to radiation developed malignant gliomas, a deadly brain cancer. 5 to 7% of the rats developed certain heart tumors, called schwannomas. Current cellphones represent a 4<sup>th</sup> generation (4G), which are safer. They have higher frequencies, which are less capable to penetrate body tissue. On the other hand, there are no longitudinal studies that have investigated human cellphone use over a period of 10, 20, or 30 years. On August 25, Senator John McCain died of glioblastoma – possibly as a result of frequent cellphone use over the years.

Cellphone users should use the cautionary principle and follow the advice issued to consumers about how to lower their exposure to radiation. One way to do it is to reduce the length and frequency of calls and to increase the distance between the cellphone and the body.

### **Massive Data Breach at Marriott**

Over a period of four years, hackers have stolen information on as many as 500 million guests of the Marriott hotel empire. It is one the largest data breaches ever, exceeding even those involving Equifax and Target. It is at this point no clear who the hackers were and what they did with the credit card information and other private data. The incident once again illustrates that computer systems vulnerable to attack and manipulation, including electronic voting systems. Marriott has set up a website and call center for customers who believe they are at risk.

### **New Mexico Is "a Foreign Country"**

New Mexico became a U.S. state 106 years ago, in 1912. But when Gavin Clarkson on Nov. 20 applied for a marriage license in Washington, D.C. he was told by an incompetent clerk and her supervisor in the office that New Mexico was a foreign country. They refused to accept his New Mexico driver's license and told him he needed an international passport. Luckily for Clarkson, the situation was resolved after some delay. A spokesperson for the District of Columbia Courts Marriage Bureau later expressed regret over the embarrassing incident. – It's not news that the average American citizen is pretty clueless about the rest of the world, but to encounter such ignorance about domestic geography and history is shocking. What do they teach at the K-12 schools?

### **"Team of Vipers" by Cliff Sims**

The latest in a string of books to shed light on the unprecedented presidency of Donald Trump is "Team of Vipers: My 500 Extraordinary Days in the Trump White House" by Cliff Sims, a former White House message-strategy director who joined the Trump campaign in August of 2016. The book will be published by Thomas Dunne Books, a division of St. Martin's Press, on Jan. 29. As the title suggests, Sims' insider memoir paints a grim picture of the atmosphere in the White House. It is portrayed as a chaotic and venomous place where people are either secretly backstabbing each other or openly at each other's throats. In a note, Sims writes, "I suspect that posterity will look back at this bizarre time in history like we were living on the pages of a Dickens novel." Trump's presidency is a surreal anomaly indeed, and future generations will have a hard time figuring out how and why it happened. Books such as "Team of Vipers" can help explain the unexplainable and will provide fodder for the future William Shakespeare who will someday capture the current fever and madness in the White House and in the nation.

### **"Bowling Alone" by Robert Putnam**

The 11/16 edition of the "Chronicle of Higher Education" described a poll on the most influential scholarly books of the last 20 years. One title in particular stood out, having been nominated and profiled by multiple people: Robert D. Putnam's magisterial account on the decline of civic life and social cohesion in America – "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community" (Simon & Schuster, 2000). Putnam's thesis is that American democracy and society are suffering from a prodigious erosion and loss in "social capital." Individuals are less engaged in activities that bind them together and lead to mutual trust. For example, today they watch TV or exercise at home, and they go to church less often and participate with lesser frequency in civic organizations. It is not a coincidence that voter turnout fell dramatically. When relationships are weakened or severed, people are more likely to be siloed, polarized, alienated, and distrustful. Many people have taken up arms. The result is a society in crisis. – "Bowling Alone" was and is controversial. Some readers felt that Putnam exaggerated the situation. Others noted that social cohesion can hide the presence of discrimination and exclusion. However, the fact is that despite, or because of, modern technology the breakdown of society and community has continued to this day. We are at a point today where there is serious discussion whether democracy is failing. Almost 20 years after its publication, Putnam's study remains an essential reference point in these debates.

### **Bernie Sanders, "Where We Go from Here"**

Vermont senator Bernie Sanders has a new book out: "Where We Go from Her – Two Years in the Resistance" (St. Martin's / Thomas Dunn, Nov. 27, 288 pp.). The popular senator speaks about what he's been doing to oppose the Trump agenda and strengthen the progressive movement and how we go forward as a nation. Like "Our

Revolution" (2016), the book is offered as "a guide for members of the progressive movement." – At press time, no further details were available.

### **"Single-Use" Is the Word of the Year**

"Fake news" was the word of the year in 2017. Collins Dictionary has now chosen "single-use" as the 2018 word of the year. There has been a significant increase of the use of the word, highlighting our addiction to disposable, single-stream products such as plastic bottles, bags & straws and other products that are used only once and then discarded. There is growing awareness that the ubiquitous use of disposable items is not good for the environment and a waste of natural resources. – A related top-ten word is "plogging," based on the Swedish word "ploka." It refers to the practice of picking up litter during one's daily jogs. The fad became a global trend in 2016. Let's phase out single-use products that often end up in the environment. In the meantime, let's all practice "plogging" during our daily walks and jogs.

The Oxford English Dictionary chose the word "toxic" whereas Dictionary.com opted for "misinformation" as the word of year in 2018.

### **Vaping Offers No Benefits**

New longitudinal research from a team of OSU scientists published in "Nicotine & Tobacco Research" has determined that people who vape are unlikely to quit conventional smoking. E-cigarettes do not lead to tobacco cessation in the long run. In fact, the opposite is true. The promotion of e-cigarettes by the industry is actually creating new generations of smokers among teenagers. There are also open questions about the negative health effects of vaping. E-cigarettes are dangerous to youth and are not FDA-approved cessation devices. The FDA recommends nicotine-replacement products instead.

### **How to Beat Seasonal Affective Disorder by Tom Wolber**

The dark days of winter have arrived. Short days and long nights, lack of sunlight, and colder temperatures trigger powerful biological reactions in plants, animals, and humans. Many animals shut down and hibernate or fall into a state of torpor. In people, too, winter can trigger an episodic physiological response called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). The level of melatonin (a sleep hormone) goes up, and folks become tired, inactive, disinterested, lethargic, and even depressed. We crave warmth and comfort, including comfort foods such as cookies and chocolate. This is a natural, biologically based survival strategy, not a psychosomatic "disorder." In times when the temperatures fall and food becomes scarce, conserving energy is a logical adoptive behavior.

A more general feeling of winter blues is experienced by up to 20 percent of the population. Depending on the exact definition of the word, about 5 percent of Americans suffer from the more debilitating effects of SAD. The farther north you go, the more pronounced SAD becomes. In sun-rich southern states such as Florida, SAD prevalence is as low as 1-2 percent, but in northern states such as New Hampshire or Alaska it can be as high as 10 percent. The same is true for Europe where SAD is highest in Scandinavia and Russia and lowest in the Mediterranean countries.

The scientist who first explored SAD in a systematic manner was Norman E. Rosenthal. His book "Winter Blues" (published in 1983) remains the standard introduction. The good news, according to experts such as Rosenthal, is that there are multiple techniques and therapies that allow you to cope with SAD. They advise to stay active during the winter months. If you bundle up, you can still go outside and catch some fresh air, sunshine, and vitamin D. Taking regular walks will boost your mood and morale. It is well-established that exercise has an antidepressant effect. Another strategy is "talking therapy": staying socially involved with family members, relatives, friends, or a counselor. You may want to join a club or start a new hobby.

"Light therapy" is another natural strategy to fight the winter blues. Specifically equipped SAD "light boxes" ensure that you receive a daily dose of bright light. White fluorescent light seems to work best. For optimal treatment, 10,000 lux is recommended. There are no

known side effects, but please use the boxes only as directed. The boxes are commercially available. (There is actually a medical reason why we light all these candles during the winter season.)

A healthy, balanced diet can also help people stay alert and functional during the winter season. Studies have shown, for example, that fish-eating nations such as Iceland and Japan have significantly lower SAD rates compared to other countries in the northern hemisphere.

If you have the time and means, a ski trip to sunny mountain slopes or a trip to the Caribbean can also do wonders for you. Some folks have permanently relocated to more southern climates, with good results as far as SAD is concerned.

In the overwhelming majority of SAD cases, prescribed antidepressants and medical intervention is not required. Only in extraordinary circumstances may episodic SAD lead to a more serious chronic depression. This would be the time when professional medical help is called for and when antidepressants should be used as a last resort. If you exercise, stay socially connected, seek out natural or artificial light, and eat well, you should be able to survive the annual winter funk without great difficulties.

*(A version of this article appeared in OWU's student paper "The Transcript" in the past.)*

## THE WORLD

### Mexico Has a New President

Mexico's new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (also known as AMLO), will take the oath of office on Dec. 1. He is the first leftist president in over 70 years. He has vowed to deal with rampant corruption, crime, poverty, violence, and other intractable problems that Mexico faces. His outgoing predecessor, Enrique Peña Nieto, is leaving with low approval ratings.

### Fewer Chinese Tourists Coming to the U.S.

Chinese tourists are coming in fewer numbers to the U.S., and their wallets are less open. That means luxury-item retailers such as Tiffany & Co., Ralph Lauren, and Movado are hurting. Their shares have fallen significantly in the last few months. Tiffany is considered a bellwether for luxury goods, and the numbers suggest that tougher times are ahead. The trade wars certainly play a role, but there is also general anxiety about an economic slowdown in 2019. In addition, the Chinese yuan, also known as the renminbi, has lost value against the dollar.

### Brexit Hurts British Economy

The conservative British government has long maintained Brexit would lead to better trade deals with foreign countries and thus lift the economy. A new official report published 11/28 abandons all pretense that leaving the European Union would improve the economy. It details that the economy will shrink, instead of expand, by as much as 8% per year. The report, and also one released by the Bank of England, also states that the British pound would lose value and housing prices could sink by 30%. The exact figures vary depending on the form the Brexit will take, but the analysis concludes that *any* form of Brexit will leave Great Britain economically worse off than before.

### French Leader Warns Against Nationalism

On the occasion of the end of WW I in 1918, French President Emmanuel Macron warned against the rising threat of nationalism in Europe and the Americas. According to him, nationalism is a dangerous and selfish ideology that often leads to wars. The "old demons" that devastated Europe in WW I and II are reemerging, he said. Macron did not name names, but it was no great secret that among the nationalist leaders he referred to was the American President, Donald Trump, who was in the audience. Trump has stated at the United Nations that he rejects the ideology of globalism and embraces the ideology of nationalism. Under Trump, America has abandoned multiple multilateral agreements and started a dangerous trade war that is making many people very nervous. He has also drastically reduced the numbers of immigrants who can legally apply in the U.S. for asylum and refugee status. Trump, who does not handle

criticism well, reportedly left France embittered. If there ever was "a bromance" between Trump and Macron, it has likely come to an end.

### Venezuelan Exodus Hits 3 Million

Venezuela has enormous political, economic, and social problems. Not surprisingly, the number of people fleeing the country of 32.5 million has reached 3 million, an exodus comparable to war-ravaged countries such as Afghanistan or Syria. Many escaped into neighboring countries such as Brazil or Colombia, but they are not always welcome there. The situation in Venezuela is dire, and there are reports of food shortages and lack of medicines.

### South Korea's Samsung Apologizes

For years, South Korean conglomerate Samsung has denied any responsibility for the disproportionate number of illnesses and deaths among its blue-collar employees. According to activists, some 240 workers people fell ill. 80 of them died of leukemia, brain cancer, or 14 other forms of cancer. Other workers suffered miscarriages or congenital complications. Another group says that 320 employees at Samsung developed illnesses after being exposed to toxic chemicals at the chip factories and claims 118 people died as a result. Samsung has now admitted that it failed to create a safe working environment at its computer chip factories and issued an apology for its unethical denial and lack of action. It has also pledged to pay the equivalent of more than \$100,000 for each employee family.

There are countless facilities in the world, including many in the U.S., that continue to deny culpability for diseases and deaths despite strong scientific evidence to the contrary. Deny, delay, and deflect is their strategy. It took activists more than 10 years to reach a settlement with Samsung. In other instances, it has taken decades. The take-away lesson is never to give up, document everything, find allies, and hope that your day in court will come.

### The Environmental Footprint of Smartphones

Smartphones have a surprisingly large environmental footprint. It requires a tremendous amount of energy to mine the 60+ metals needed for these devices and to assemble them. A 2015 study concluded that the production of each iPhone 6 released the equivalent of 178 pounds of carbon dioxide, about as much as burning 9 gallons of gas or running a modern refrigerator a year. The situation is compounded by the fact that the average person uses his or phone only for about two years. The business model promotes frequent and expensive upgrades while masking the true production costs of phones. Another problem is that discarded electronic devices, which contain a lot of toxic materials, often end up in landfills.

### The Rise of Germany's Green Party

In Germany, the establishment is in crisis. The two dominant parties after WW II, the conservative CDU/CSU and the liberal SPD, have been hemorrhaging members and voters for years. To a large extent, the 40-year-old Green Party ("Die Grünen") has filled the void. They are now the most credible party, modern but loyal to its principles. The Greens, said one voter, are "the true conservatives" – they want to protect the environment, traditional values, education, the welfare state, and German prosperity. They are also unapologetically pro-Europe and pro-immigration. As a result, they have been able to recruit members from the left, the center, and the right. "The party benefits from a long tradition of environmentalism in Germany that cuts across the political spectrum, from the progressive left to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romantic nationalists describing the forest as the home of the German soul" (New York Times, 11/28). Today, the Greens are the largest party in cities such as Berlin and states such as Baden-Württemberg. Major metropolitan areas have green mayors, and major states have green governors. At the going rate, it may be just a matter of time before Germany has its first male or female federal chancellor ("Bundeskanzler").

### Forests and Climate Change

Earth has lost much of its forest canopy due to agriculture, industry, infrastructure, population growth, and urbanization. Millions and billions of trees were felled. The ongoing deforestation has contributed much to the warming of the planet. The fewer the trees, the hotter the planet. It follows that reforestation efforts can be an effective way to offset climate change. Not only do trees sequester



carbon for years to come, they also provide the benefit of cooling down the areas they grow in. Additional benefits include wildlife habitat and stormwater retention and filtration. A paper recently published in "Science Advances" concluded that improved forest-management strategies could offset as much as 21% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. That number is in line with past estimates. As early as 2009, the New York Times reported that "deforestation accounts for one-fifth of the world's greenhouse gases." Maintaining and increasing the existing tree canopy, including on the local level, is an important component in the war against climate change.

### **Facebook Launches "Today In"**

Facebook is trying to shake off its reputation as a toxic hotbed for false and misleading information. To that end, it is rolling out "Today In," a feature that provides people with access to local news. Similar to "Nextdoor," it is intended to include information on missed persons or pets, road closures, crime reports, school announcements, and so on. "Today In" is currently available, or will shortly be available, in about 400 small and midsize U.S. cities, including Columbus, Ohio. The slow rollout is intentional. Facebook is trying to learn how people might use or misuse the feature. The posts in "Today In" are policed by artificial intelligence only; there is no human involvement. However, algorithms often reflect the biases of their creators (male, white, young, liberal, healthy, West Coast, etc.). In addition, Facebook will undoubtedly encounter people who will attempt to use "Today In" for advertising, buying & selling goods and services, which would dilute the value of the feature.

### **Chinese Researcher Creates Gene-Edited Babies**

A young Chinese physicist, Dr. He Jiankui from Shenzhen, claims to have edited the DNA of two twin girls to help them resist infection with the AIDS virus. So far, there is no independent verification that Dr. He, 34, did what he said, and he has not published any of his research. If true, however, his work would be an abominable violation of international standards. Editing eggs, sperm, or embryos makes permanent changes that can be passed on to future generations. Such research is illegal in the U.S. The technology is not yet mature enough to be used, and the risk of unintended consequences is considerable. In addition, there is ethical question of creating "designer babies" with certain preferred features or superior skills. Dr. He's rogue experiment was unnecessary, reckless, and immoral, and the international community of scientists is right to condemn it. The case shows a failure of the field to police itself and the need for stricter regulations. In addition, Dr. He did not make his university aware of his research and never asked for approval from Chinese authorities. All his activities are now suspended. – Dr. He received his Ph.D. in Biophysics from Rice University in 2010. His doctoral advisor, Prof. Michael W. Deem, is also being investigated.

### **The Rise and Fall of Bitcoin**

It was only one year ago that the cryptocurrency Bitcoin was valued at almost US-\$20,000. As of mid-November, it has fallen well below \$5,000, a decline of 75%. Other cryptocurrencies such as Ether, Litecoin, and XRP are also under pressure. – Bitcoin, the virtual or digital currency, debuted in 2009. It is a decentralized electronic payment system that is independent from governments. Even though it has always been a volatile and risky investment, it does have its fans.



### **Magnus Carlsen v. Fabiano Caruana**

The number #1 and #2 chess players of the world, Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana, fought for the title of world chess champion in London last month. The undisputed king of chess, Carlsen (now 27), was the favorite, but Caruana (26) is also a phenomenal player. It was hoped that U.S.-born Caruana, who lives in St. Louis, would generate some excitement about chess in the U.S. The nation

has not had a world chess champion since 1972 when Bobby Fischer wrestled the title from Boris Spassky. The match started with a record-setting series of 12 draws. Neither player was willing to take big risks, and they frequently exchanged queens and rooks early in their games. As a result, on Nov. 28 Carlsen and Caruana began an arduous run of speed and blitz chess games. As it turned out, it took only 3 speed chess games for Carlsen to win the tournament and to retain his title.

The world champion, Magnus Carlsen, is from Tonsberg, near Oslo in Norway. He became a grandmaster at the age of 13 and has been the world's top-rated player for the past 8 years. He is currently defending his title against Fabiano Caruana, an American of Italian descent. Not surprisingly, the 5 million Norwegians are gripped by a bad case of chess fever. Norway may be the most chess-crazy country in the world at the moment, more so than Russia. Every one of Carlsen's games is televised, and people flock to bars to watch them as if they were football games. There is chess education in primary schools, and people play chess on their mobile phones in street cars. There are brick-and-mortar chess stores even in smaller towns such as Drammen, something that would be unthinkable in the U.S. where many communities don't even have bookstores. Chess is sexy, and smart is cool in Norway.

Local chess players meet each Saturday morning and afternoon at Choffey's Coffee & Confection, 17 W. Winter St. All levels are welcome, and boards are provided. Quite a few are experienced USCF-rated members with lots of tournament experience who can teach interested parties all kinds of things.

### **A Sequel to "The Handmaid's Tale"**

Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, 79, has announced that she is writing a sequel to "The Handmaid's Tale" (1985). Entitled "The Testaments," it will be published in September 2019. Atwood recognized early that "we live in an age of dystopias," and some of her books are written to bear witness to the eerie parallels between the modern world and anti-utopias. The author has long been on the list of prospective Nobel Prize winners, an award she richly deserves.

### **2026 Winter Olympics**

Beijing is hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics, but the location for the 2026 games remains an open question. Canada's Calgary is the latest city where voters rejected the plan to bid for the games. Before that, Swiss city Sion, Japan's Sapporo, and Graz in Austria also withdrew. The situation is another blow for the International Olympic Committee, which has seen interest in hosting the winter and summer games plunge significantly as costs have skyrocketed. In Calgary's case, the cost of hosting was estimated to be \$5.1 billion in Canadian dollars, a fairly typical amount. In addition to building costs, there are many problems associated with such events – social displacement, economic inequities, environmental damage, transit problems, security issues, etc. Many cities and countries have concluded that the expense far exceeds the benefit for hosting the Olympic Games. There is indeed little evidence that such events increase tourism or draw new investment in the long run. This is, however, a tendency among authoritarian countries (China, Russia, Nazi Germany, etc.) to finance the games as a way to mask the illiberal nature of their regimes. – The Calgary vote leaves Sweden's Stockholm and Italy's Milan as the only candidates left as hosts for the 2026 Winter Olympics.

### **Dead Whale Has Belly Full of Plastic**

A dead sperm whale washed ashore in Indonesia had more than 1,000 pieces of plastic in its stomach, including cups, bottles, bags, and flip-flops. The whale was already decomposing when found and the cause of death could no longer be determined. However, it is a well-established fact that countless marine animals die every year due to entanglements with plastic items or from swallowing them. A dead whale found in Spain contained 64 pounds of plastic products that clogged its stomach and intestines, leading to its demise. Indonesia is the world's second-largest producer of plastic waste, behind only China.

## **SPACE**

### **International Space Station Turns 20**

The International Space Station is 20 years old. The first module was put in place on Nov. 20, 1998. Many more followed. The multinational space station typically hosts a 6-person crew. Over the years, more than 230 individual astronauts and cosmonauts from many different countries have served on board. For some, the IPS is a shining model of international cooperation, for others a colossal waste of money. The current White House plans to stop funding the station after 2024 and to hand the responsibility over to the private sector.

### **Bill Nye, "We Will Not Live on Mars"**

Bill Nye, the famous science educator who just turned 62, very much doubts that humans will have permanent colonies on Mars anytime soon. If you want to eat, drink, breathe, stay warm, and raise a family, then Mars is not for you, he said in an interview with "USA Today." At best, there will be scientists stationed in protected domes for limited periods of time. The whole idea of colonizing and "terraforming" Mars is ludicrous, he maintains. "Terraforming" is the hypothetical idea of altering the surface and climate of Mars to make it more hospitable to humans. Nye is correct when he says, "We can't even take care of this planet where we live, and we're perfectly suited for it." "The Science Guy" is not opposed to space exploration and to traveling to the Red Planet to make interesting discoveries, however.

### **Did the Moonlanding Ever Happen?**

A surprising number of people believe that the American moon landings never happened. They are convinced that they were staged from beginning to end and one of the vastest hoaxes ever committed. Conspiracy theories surrounding NASA's moon missions are particularly common outside America, including in Russia. If you think these people are crazy, consider this. In science, the concept of replication is paramount. If an experiment cannot be repeated with the same result, it might have been faked. In this light, it does seem peculiar that no country on Earth has been able to replicate the manned moon landings between 1969 and 1972 in the decades since. If this were a published scientific experiment, it might be rescinded as a result of its irreproducibility. Maybe people were more gullible in the 1960s and 1970s, but today we are accustomed to fake news, trickery, and scams everywhere, including in science. Auto manufacturers cheat on emissions, pharmaceutical companies pay researchers to deliver the desired outcome, banks defraud customers, and governments routinely lie to voters. We are in the midst of a knowledge crisis where trust has vanished, misconduct is widespread, integrity has worn thin, and the very essence of what constitutes "facts" and "reality" are being questioned. The final jury is still out on the moon landings and the ultimate truth may never be known, but few people would be surprised if someday they heard definitive proof that the manned moon missions were indeed a mirage, created to deceive. – To learn more about the issue, see the lengthy and fairly balanced report "Moon Landing Conspiracy Theories" on Wikipedia.

### **Paul M. Sutter, "Your Place in the Universe"**

Paul M. Sutter, OSU Cosmologist and Chief Scientist at COSI, has a new book out: "Your Place in the Universe – Understanding our Big, Messy Existence" (Prometheus Books, Nov. 2018, 280 pp., \$24). Sutter is a media-savvy storyteller, and "Community Matters" highly recommends this very accessible book. Below is the edited description provided by amazon.com on its website:

*"The book presents an in-depth tour of the universe for lay readers, while conveying the excitement of astronomy. How is a galaxy billions of light years away connected to us? Is our home nothing more than a tiny speck of blue in an ocean of night? In this exciting tour of a universe far larger than we can imagine, Sutter emphasizes how amazing it is that we are part of such a huge, complex, and mysterious place. Through metaphors and uncomplicated language, Sutter breathes life into the science of astrophysics, unveiling how particles, forces, and fields interplay to create the greatest of cosmic dramas. Touched with the author's characteristic breezy, conversational style (which has made him a break-out hit on venues such as the Weather Channel, the Science Channel, and his own popular "Ask a Spaceman" podcast), he conveys the fun and wonder of delving deeply into the physical processes of the natural universe. He weaves together the past and future histories of our universe with grounded descriptions of essential modern-day physics as well as speculations based on the latest research in cosmology. Topics include our current state of*

*knowledge, our place in the Milky Way galaxy, the cosmic web (a vast web-like pattern in which galaxies are arranged), the origins of our universe in the Big Bang, the mysteries of dark matter and dark energy, how science has dramatically changed our relationship to the cosmos, conjectures about the future of reality as we know it, and more. For any child, teenager, or adult who has ever stared at the starry night sky and wondered how we humans on Earth fit into the big picture, this book is an essential roadmap."*

## **HAPPY NEWS**

### **City of Dayton Offers Paid Parental Leave**

In a New York Times op-ed piece (11/24), Dayton's Democratic mayor Nan Whaley recently commented on the outcome of the midterm elections in Ohio. She mentioned in her essay that Dayton is proud to become "the first major Ohio city to offer paid parental leave for municipal employees," thus improving economic security for new parents. Dayton voters also approved "a plan to fund high-quality preschool for every 4-year-old in the city." In her article, she expressed optimism about the future of the Democratic Party in Ohio. While Ohio Democrats may have received a shellacking on November 6, given the right approach and commitment to the kitchen-table concerns of working people she sees a path out of the wilderness.



*Sea Turtle by David Griesmyer*

### **Ohio Art Corridor**

The State of Ohio ranks at or near the bottom of the nation in many, many respects. Here is a welcome bit of positive information, however. David Griesmyer, the owner of a metal-fabrication business in Malta (Morgan Co.), has started to create the Ohio Art Corridor, an expansive outdoor art gallery that officially opened in October. The 144-mile art trail in southeastern Ohio includes both old art that already exists and new art that will be added over the next few years. Current stops are in Athens, Circleville, Lancaster, McConnelville, and Zanesville. Once completed, the 230-mile art trail will be the world's longest art gallery. Welding artist Griesmyer says his goal is to increase access to art and culture in an impoverished region of the state. If provided the opportunity and if surrounded by beauty, he notes, "people aspire to greater things." The Ohio Art Corridor will also have the practical effect of increasing tourism and has the blessing of many state and local officials.

### **Food Donations Instead of Parking Fines**

Northern Michigan Univ. in Marquette on Michigan's Upper Peninsula accepts nonperishable food donations to its food pantry in lieu of parking fines. Items can be brought on designated drop-off days. Depending on their value, they can reduce or eliminate accrued parking fees. Donors can even win a free parking permit! – NMU's "Food 4 Fines" program is similar to efforts elsewhere to reduce or eliminate parking or library fines through in-kind donations.

### **Riley Morrison, 9, Writes Impactful Letter**

Riley Morrison from Kansas is only 9 years old, but a handwritten letter of hers made a big splash. Riley is a basketball player, but when she attempted to buy a pair of Stephen Curry's Under Armour Curry 5 basketball sneakers she noticed to her dismay that these shoes existed only for boys, not for girls. That did not sit well with her and she wrote a letter to the Golden State Warriors star. "Girls play basketball too," she noted. Steve Curry promptly wrote back, saying he has started to work with Under Armour to correct the problem. The shoes are now available on the Under Armour website in the girl's section as well, and Riley couldn't be happier about it.

### **A Good-Government Bill**

Democrats unveiled their first bill for the new Congress on Nov. 30, called H.R. 1. It sets the tone for what hope to achieve. The bill has several goals: 1. It would limit big and dark money in politics. Political groups would need to disclose donors. Members of Congress would be barred from serving on corporate boards. 2. The bill would also create automatic national voter registration and expand early and online registration. It would increase federal support for state voting systems, including paper ballots to prevent electronic fraud. 3. The bill would also establish independent commissions to draw the boundaries for congressional districts, a move designed to reduce and eliminate partisan "gerrymandering." 4. In addition, there are provisions that require U.S. presidents to release their tax returns and the Supreme Court to abide by an ethics code. Democrats hope to have the new bill ready by Jan. 3, the first day of the next Congress.

### **Octavio-Cortez Admits to "Vast Conspiracy"**

Fox News has discovered a new favorite adversary – the recently elected congresswoman from New York Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. At age 29, she is the youngest woman ever elected to Congress. According to Wikipedia, "Ocasio-Cortez is a self-described hardliner on environmental issues, calling climate change the 'single biggest national security threat' facing the U.S. She advocates for the U.S. to transition by 2035 to an electrical grid running on 100% renewable-energy production and end the use of fossil fuels. She also calls for a Green New Deal in the U.S., in which the federal government would invest in the construction of large-scale green-infrastructure projects." Not surprisingly, the TV channel accused her of being "wacky" and wanting "to wreak havoc." This is not the first time Fox News has ridiculed Ocasio-Cortez. For example, it made fun of her when she encountered financial trouble paying for an apartment in Washington before she had received her first compensation payment.

Ocasio-Cortez responded on Instagram with humor by saying, "Fox News discovered our vast conspiracy to take care of children and save the planet." Saving the planet and ensuring the future of our children – that is a conspiracy theory "Community Matters" fully subscribes to as well.

### **Florida Ends Racist Voting Ban**

On Nov. 6, Floridians voted to end the 150-year-old ban that prevented more than 1 million felons and ex-felons from voting. After the Civil War and the end of slavery, the southern state wanted to keep the roster of black voters as small as possible. It did so by creating a slate of nebulous and flimsy laws against "disobedience," "vagrancy," "larceny," and so on, intended to once again incarcerate freed blacks, continue prison slavery, and disenfranchise them of their constitutionally guaranteed voting right. As of 2016, more than 1 in 5 black Floridians with a criminal record could not vote because of the rule. In 1889, Florida became the first U.S. state to adopt an annual poll tax that poor blacks would not be able to afford. Additional laws aimed at reducing the number of black voters included literacy laws and residency rules. These blatantly racist laws were quite effective. In 1940, only 3% of black Floridians were registered to vote. Amendment 4 passed with a vote of 64% despite strong and stubborn opposition from GOP operatives such as Rick Scott and Ron DeSantis who feared Amendment 4 would make whites a voting minority in the state and weaken white dominance. – In a democracy, voting is a fundamental human right for everyone, not a privilege for a select few. It is good to hear that Florida is no longer a national leader in voter suppression.

### **Nevada Eliminates "Tampon Tax"**

On Nov. 6, Nevada became the 10<sup>th</sup> U.S. state to get rid of a 6.85% sales tax on tampons and sanitary pads for women. Feminine-care products associated with menstruation are not a luxury, proponents say, but a medical necessity, and should be treated like all other health-care supplies. – In Ohio, a bill was introduced last year that would eliminate the tampon tax, but it stalled. House Bill 61 is currently attempting to get rid of the "pink tax," as some call it. While feminine-care products continue to be taxed in Ohio, male-centered products such as Viagra, penile pumps, and men's suspensories are not taxed. Obviously, this is a grossly unfair situation.

### **Michael Bloomberg Gives \$1.8 Billion to Johns Hopkins**

Former mayor of New York Michael Bloomberg has announced that he will give \$1.8 billion to his alma mater, Johns Hopkins Univ. in Baltimore, Maryland. The gift is intended to support financial aid to students and "to make admissions at Hopkins forever need-blind." With this latest gift, Bloomberg's total lifetime giving to Hopkins exceeds \$3.3 billion. Bloomberg, 76, graduated from Hopkins in 1964.

Selective private schools are expensive. Some, including Hopkins, charge \$70,000 for tuition & fees, room & board. The federal Pell grants provide a maximum of \$6,095 a year for students, making selective private schools unaffordable for students from low-and-middle-income families. At elite colleges and universities, more students come from the top 1% of the population than from the entire 60% of the bottom. Bloomberg's gift, believed to be the largest private donation in modern times to higher education, will eliminate the need for student loans and will make Hopkins accessible to any academically qualified student, not just the rich.

In an op-ed piece written for the New York Times (11/19), Bloomberg lamented the fact that federal and state support for higher education has fallen. He noted that private donations cannot possibly make up for the lack of government support. Bloomberg is right. Nothing matters more than education. Investment in education is an investment in the American dream and the American future.

### **FBI Begins to Track Deadly-Force Cases**

It's hard to believe, there is no national database that tracks the 1,000+ cases where law-enforcement officers use deadly force, often against people of color. Existing statistics had to be created by newspapers because police departments prefer to keep these numbers secret. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is now finally launching its own database in January. It will also track the gender, age, and ethnicity of victims. One problem remains, however. Police departments are not required to report their information to the database, which greatly limits its value. It is conceivable that numerous cities, counties, and entire U.S. states will not report their dark statistics to the FBI. There is no good reason why this loophole should remain open. Every human life is precious, and there must be full transparency about every single police shooting.

### **Jon Meacham, "The Soul of America"**

Pulitzer-Prize winner Jon Meacham has written an inspiring new book, "The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels" (Random House 2018, 416 pp, list price \$30). Appalled by what he sees in America today, Meacham reminds us that "the better angels of our nature" (Lincoln) have repeatedly won the day. The nation has gone through dark times before, only to emerge stronger each time. Meacham, primarily a biographer, paints empathetic portraits of Lincoln and many other presidents (Grant, T. Roosevelt, Wilson, F. Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower & Johnson) as well as pioneers of the women's and civil rights movements. He writes about the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Lost Cause, the backlash against immigrants, the rise of the KKK, American demagogues & Jim Crow. Each of these dramatic battles ended by hope winning over fear. They moved the country forward instead of backward. Time and again, Lincoln's better angels found a way to prevail. Meacham believes in this case, too, the nation will summon and embrace its better angels, move beyond President Trump, and emerge more resolved as a result of being tested. Skeptics may scoff at Meacham's optimism and, clearly, in many respects America has fallen short and remains more an unfulfilled pipe dream than a fulfilled prophecy. But there is no denying that "The Soul of America" is a deeply positive and inspiring book that shows what is possible if true patriots work together.

### **Ben Sasse's "Them: Why We Hate Each Other"**

Republican senator Ben Sasse from Nebraska has written a new book that is being discussed widely: "Them: Why We Hate Each Other, and How to Heal." He starts by pointing out that America seems to have lost its way. Rootlessness, loneliness, estrangement, despair, and anger are widespread in society. Trust has disappeared, and the nation has descended into hostile tribalism and partisanship. In 2018, more than 70,000 Americans are expected to die from drug overdoses and 45,000 from suicide.

However, Sasse, who holds a Ph.D. in history from Yale Univ. and served as a college president for a while, sees a path

forward. He wants us to develop real roots, by which he means meaningful relationships with real people and real places. As modern society, economy, and technology nudge us toward ever greater mobility and superficiality, we must resist that urge and look for ways to rediscover deeper bonds and stronger ties in so-called "thick communities." You don't have to move back to your old home town to do that, Sasse emphasizes. Any place will do as long you are willing to embrace your new neighborhood, emerge from your cocoon, and participate fully and meaningfully in the life of the community as an engaged citizen. – No doubt skeptics will argue that not all is well in close-knit communities either. There may be political, economic & social divisions that cause conflict. Not everyone may feel welcome and included. However, at the very least many people know each other, look out for each other, and care for each other in times of crisis and need.

### **France Returns Art Works to Benin**

French President Emmanuel Macron has decided to return 26 artifacts to Benin. The West African country has demanded their repatriation for some time. After the French Army conquered the Kingdom of Dahomey in 1892 after bloody battles, the statues and thrones were looted and shipped to Europe. France holds at least 90,000 pieces from sub-Saharan Africa, of which 70,000 are in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris. Many of them were seized during the colonial period under some form of duress. Following Macron's announcement, other sub-Saharan African states (among them Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mali, and Senegal) have also demanded the return of artwork held in French museums. – The situation is similar in other European countries.



*For works Clet Abraham. The European artist often adds humor to street signs, such as a rat with a jackhammer or a sumo wrestler.*

### **The Street Art of Clet Abraham**

Forget Banksy. French artist Clet Abraham, who lives in Italy, has been stealthily sneaking around Europe in the middle of the night for years to create public art. His canvas are the thousands of street signs that are everywhere. He changes their meaning in quirky and humorous ways by adding stickers that depict people, animals, or other components. He might, for instance, attach eyes and a forked tongue to a curvy-road sign to transform it into a snake. Sometimes, there are religious references, such as when he attaches a crucified Jesus to a dead-end (cul-de-sac) sign. His alterations are so subtle and use so little space (never more than 10%) that sometimes no one even notices them for months. For example, he visited Scotland in March of 2017 where he "hacked" a number of signs, but it went unnoticed for 18 months, the BBC recently reported.

Abraham, born in 1966, encourages people to think critically before blindly obeying orders. He says, "I am against authority without discussion." Not surprisingly, authorities are prone to accuse the anarchic artist of unlawful "vandalism" and fine him. In Japan, he has even been arrested. However, the residents of many cities are honored and proud whenever Abraham pays a visit and consider his signs

public art. After all, his shenanigans do not disturb the essential message and meaning of the traffic signs; he merely adds new components to them. Each one of his signs is worth thousands of British pounds or American dollars, and it's just a matter of time before they will end up in museums.

Delaware's City Manager Tom Homan often speaks of the value of "public art." One wonders how he and the Engineering Department would feel if some day Clet Abraham paid Delaware a visit. Our fair city would be famous, and tourists would come from far and wide. But rules are rules, and no doubt the signs would have to come down.

### **Benjamin Franklin, "Poor Richard's Almanack"**

*Under the pen name Poor Richard or Poor Dick, Benjamin Franklin wrote almost a thousand pithy sayings between 1733 and 1758. Below is a selection. The original spelling has been modernized.*

"The family of fools is ancient."

"Little strokes fell great oaks."

"He that is of the opinion money will do everything may well be suspected of doing everything for money."

"The bird that sits is easily shot."

"No man ever was glorious who was not laborious."

"A spoonful of honey will catch more flies than a gallon of vinegar."

"The rotten apple spoils his companions."

"Where there's marriage without love, there will be love without marriage."

"A full belly makes a dull brain."

"Wars bring scars."

"Eat to live; live not to eat."

"Time is an herb that cures all diseases."

"Those who in quarrels interpose, must often wipe a bloody nose."

"Anger and folly walk cheek by jowl."

"Whatever is begun in anger, ends in shame."

"Those who are feared are hated."

"Great talkers, little doers."

"You may soon recover from the slip of the foot, but never from a slip of the tongue."

"The Golden Age never was the present age."

"Love thy enemies, for they tell you your faults."

"A good example is the best sermon."

"Who is strong? He who can conquer his bad habits."

"Learning is the natural source of wealth and honor."