

# Community Matters

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

**March 2021**  
**Vol. 6, No. 9**

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

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**snowdrops**

what's the snowdrop's secret  
i would like to know  
long before the start of spring  
it puts on a verdant show  
from the polar north  
the howling storms blow  
the ponds are frozen solid  
the forecast has hit a low  
and yet the little plant  
conquers ice and snow  
it seems to want to teach us  
to boldly and bravely grow  
even when faced with hostility  
it allows hope to glow

## CALENDAR OF LOCAL EVENTS

### **Outdoor Siren Test (3/3)**

Delaware County tests its outdoor sirens on the first Wednesday of each month at 12 pm. This is a planned test, and there is no reason for alarm.

### **First Friday: "March for Art" (3/5)**

Main Street Delaware celebrates March First Friday with "March for Art" (March 5, 6-9 pm) with approx. 20 participating downtown businesses, exhibitions, artist demos, live music & more. Artwork from the Delaware City Schools will remain up for a week.

### **OWU Performs German Play (3/5-6)**

Ohio Wesleyan's Spring Senior Project Production features a modern retelling of Georg Büchner's "Woyzeck," a drama fragment written in the late 1830s. Senior Logan Kovach, a theater major and German minor, has translated and adapted Büchner's work to depict "the plight of everyday workers." The play contains strong language & violence and is geared toward adults only. The free performance will be held on Fri., March 5 & Sat., March 6 (8 pm) in OWU's Chappellear Drama Center, 45 Rowland Ave. Seating is limited to 40 persons, and masks are required. A recorded performance will be made available at [www.owu.edu/stream](http://www.owu.edu/stream). For more info, call the box office at (740) 368-3855 or visit [www.owu.edu/TheatreAndDance](http://www.owu.edu/TheatreAndDance).

### **Home & Garden Show (3/6-14)**

The 65<sup>th</sup> annual Home & Garden Show, presented by the Columbus Dispatch, will take place March 6-14 at the Ohio Expo Center (Bricker Building) in Columbus. Motorists are asked to enter the Fairgrounds via 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Masks are required and social distancing will be enforced. Only bottled drinks (no food items) will be on sale this year. Capacity is controlled. For safety reasons, there will be no celebrity appearances and no workshops / demonstrations. Tickets will NOT be sold on site. They are available online and at Lowe's. (Details at [www.dispatchhomeandgardenshow.com](http://www.dispatchhomeandgardenshow.com).)

### **OWU Lecture: Bobby Gonzalez (3/12)**

Nationally known speaker Bobby Gonzalez will give a virtual presentation at OWU on Fri., March 12 (8 pm). It is entitled "Why Latinos Are Not Spanish: The Cultural & Racial Diversity of Hispanics." Gonzalez was born and raised in South Bronx, New York. As a poet, motivational speaker, and author he draws both on his Native American (Taino) and Latino (Puerto Rican) roots. For more info, check the Instagram Page of OWU's student club "Viva."

### **Daylight Saving Time Begins (3/14)**

Daylight Saving Time begins Sun., March 14 (2 am). Clocks need to be set forward by 1 hour. ("Spring ahead, fall behind.")



### **National Pi Day (3/14)**

Pi Day celebrates the mathematical constant  $\pi$  (3.14).  $\pi$  is the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. March 14 is also the birthday of German-born physicist Albert Einstein.

### **The Ides of March (3/15)**

You have probably heard the phrase "Beware the Ides of March." It refers to the 74<sup>th</sup> day in the Roman calendar, which corresponds to March 15. On that day, in 44 BC / BCE, Roman emperor Julius Caesar was assassinated, a turning point in Roman history. The day was also used as a deadline for settling debts.

### **St. Patrick's Day (3/17)**

St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17. St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and eventually helped convert the Irish to Christianity. Besides drinking

and dancing, symbols for St. Patty's or St. Paddy's Day (both versions appear to be acceptable) include leprechauns, shamrocks, the color green, and the Celtic harp.

### **State of the County Address (3/18)**

Hosted by the Delaware Area Chamber of Commerce, the annual State of the County address by the 3 Delaware County commissioners is scheduled for Thurs., March 18 (12-1 pm). The free event will be a virtual affair via Zoom. You may register on the website of the Chamber of Commerce.

### **OWU Lecture on Race, Christianity, Sexuality (3/18)**

Educator, pastor, and author Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington, M.Div., Ph.D., will give a virtual Zoom presentation entitled "Whole Lives Matter: Race, Christianity, Sexualities" on Thurs., March 18 (7-8 pm). Washington is the founder and president of the Washington Consulting Group (WCG); his complete bio can be found there. The presentation, which focuses on intersecting identities, is sponsored by OWU's Chaplain's Office and Spectrum Resource Center. The Zoom link is available on OWU's calendar ([www.owu.edu](http://www.owu.edu)). You may also contact Chaplain Chad Johns ([cejohns@owu.edu](mailto:cejohns@owu.edu)) for more info.

### **Perkins Observatory Lecture: The Hubble Space Telescope (3/18)**

Dr. Michael Stamatikos, OSU, presents "Legacy of the Hubble Space Telescope: Celebrating over Three Decades of Discovery" (Thurs., March 18, 8 pm). His online discussion is part of the New Vistas lecture series offered by OWU's Perkins Observatory. Tickets are \$5 and may be reserved by calling (740) 363-1257. Tickets and schedules are available at [www.owu.edu/perkins](http://www.owu.edu/perkins).

### **Spring Begins (3/20)**

Spring officially begins Sat., March 20. During spring (and fall) equinox, days and nights are of equal length.

### **OWU Concert: Symphonic Wind Ensemble (3/21)**

OWU's Symphonic Wind Ensemble, conducted by faculty member Dr. Richard Edwards, will feature works by Omar Thomas, Norman Dello Joio, Michael Markowski & Carolyn Bremer on Sun., March 21 (3 pm). The online concert will be performed without an audience. It will be streamed live and archived at [www.owu.edu/stream](http://www.owu.edu/stream). Learn more at [www.owu.edu/music](http://www.owu.edu/music).



### **Bias Training by Darryl Rivers (3/23)**

National speaker and author Darryl Rivers, retired from the U.S. military and Detroit Police Department, will hold implicit and explicit bias-training workshops in Delaware for the police department and for the general public. A virtual public event is scheduled for Tues., March 23 (6 pm). More info will be available at a later point.

### **Historical Society: Early Delaware County Settlers (3/25)**

Volunteers of the Delaware County Historical Society will present "Cultural Communities: Early Delaware County Settlers and American Indians, 1770-1850" on Thurs., March 25 (7 pm). The free event will be held virtually. Online tickets are available through [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com). Donations are accepted.

### **Hayes H.S. Performs "Little Women" (3/26-27)**

Under the direction of Dr. Dara Gillis, Delaware Hayes Thespians are performing the Broadway musical "Little Women" on March 26-27. The musical follows closely the book written by Louisa May Alcott. The show will be virtual and is streamed on demand; there will be no physical seats. The show time is limited to 48 hours, from Fri., 3/26 (12 am) through Sun., 3/28 (12 am). Tickets are on

sale for \$15 per device (plus a "service fee") at [www.showtix4u.com/events/hayesthespians](http://www.showtix4u.com/events/hayesthespians).

### **OWU Poetry Reading: T Kira Madden (3/30)**

T Kira Madden, M.F.A., the author of "Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls: A Memoir" and editor of the "No Tokens" magazine, will present a virtual reading on Tues., March 30 (4:30 pm). The New York Times has called her work "a fearless debut." Madden's stunning memoir is a coming-of-age story exploring her identity as a queer, biracial teenager living in an environment of "cult-like privilege, shocking racial disparities, rampant white-collar crime, and powerfully destructive standards of beauty hiding in plain sight." Madden's reading is part of the "Poets and Writers Reading Series" offered by OWU's Dept. of English. To register for the free event and receive the presentation link, send an email to [eng@owu.edu](mailto:eng@owu.edu). Learn more at [www.owu.edu/english](http://www.owu.edu/english).

### **First Friday in April (4/2)**

First Friday in April is Fri., April 2 (6-9 pm). No further information was available at the deadline.

### **April 15 Is Income Tax Date**

The City of Delaware has confirmed that Thurs., April 15 remains tax day. Due to Covid-19 safety measures, face-to-face filing assistance is not available this year. However, the City is ready to assist residents at [incometax@delawareohio.net](mailto:incometax@delawareohio.net) or by phone at 740-203-1225. Residents are encouraged to e-file their taxes or use the drop-off service for the paperwork.

## **CITY OF DELAWARE**

### **The City of Delaware in March**

City Council meets Mon., March 8 and 22 (7 pm). A work session is scheduled for Mon., March 1 (6:30 pm). It is devoted to the real-estate market, energy aggregation, and Evans Farm. (Another work session – on recreation – is planned for Mon., April 5 at 6:30 pm.) Additional meetings include: Planning (Wed., March 3, 6:30 pm), Zoning Appeals (Wed., March 10, 6:30 pm), and Historic Preservation (Wed., March 24, 6:30 pm). In addition, the Planning Commission has a special meeting on Wed., March 17 (6:30 pm) to discuss the latest iteration of the Comprehensive Plan before it goes to City Council. The Civil Service meeting on March 3 was canceled as was Parks & Recreation (March 16). Even though the renovation of City Hall is complete, meetings continue to be virtual for the time being. Meetings may be cancelled due to a lack of agenda items or quorum, so always check the City's website ([www.delawareohio.net](http://www.delawareohio.net)).

### **The City of Delaware in April**

City Council is scheduled to meet Mon., April 12 and Mon., April 26 (7 pm). In addition, there will be a work session on Mon., April 5 (6:30 pm) that is focused on recreation. The Planning Commission meets Wed., April 7 (6:30 pm). Delaware's calendar does not currently list any additional meetings, but of course there will be the customary meetings of the Shade Tree Commission, the Historical Preservation Commission, and others.

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### **Mingo Pool Will Be Open This Summer**

In 2020, the local Jack Florance Pool was closed due to Covid-19. However, the City of Delaware plans to reopen the pool for the 2021 season, which will last from May 29 through Sept. 6. Rates will be \$6 for adults and \$4 for youth (ages 17 and under). Season tickets will go on sale in April. The pool is under new management. Mike Hamer, an experienced aquatics expert, was appointed by the City to oversee the municipal recreation program, which includes the

Mingo pool. Reopening plans include capacity limits, social distancing, and face masks.

### **Update on "The Point"**

Delaware's Public Works Director and City Engineer Bill Ferrigno recently provided an update on "The Point" project on the city's east side. The improvements have been discussed for years, but plans are still being refined. It seems both more money and more patience are required. The property-acquisition process has started and will take a year or so to be complete. Bidding on the project is expected for "late 2022 to mid-2023." The actual construction will take another 2 to 3 years, which brings us to 2025/26. The estimated total cost is now \$35 million, according to Ferrigno, a significant increase over the original estimate.

### **City Council Approves Homeport Project on East Side**

Homeport, a nonprofit dedicated to provide affordable housing, has proposed to build 52 mixed-income units on 5.38 acres at the corner of Channing St. and Vernon Ave., the site of the former Delaware County Building & Engineering Dept. A new use for the area was certainly welcome, and Homeport's plans seem perfectly reasonable. The real question was whether or not this is the appropriate site for the project. Some east-side residents didn't think that this was the case. They said that the multi-family rental units don't fit into the surrounding neighborhood consisting of single-family units. They also associated subsidized, "low income" housing with drug trafficking and falling property values. Some of these fears were no doubt exaggerated and based on lack of accurate information. Homeport operates many sites in Central Ohio and seems to be doing a good job managing them, incl. Delaware's "Arthur Place" on the west side. City staff, the Planning Commission & City Council unanimously supported the project, which was approved on Jan. 25.

However, what affected east-side residents stated is also true. They pointed out the need for a neighborhood park in the City's northeast quadrant where there is currently none. "Please make our east side beautiful with a park," one concerned resident wrote. The City of Delaware has historically neglected the part of the Fourth Ward that's on the other, underinvested side of the Olentangy. To redress that social wrong and to enhance the quality of life for all Delawarians, the City of Delaware should seriously look at a new park on the northeast side. Isn't the Greenwood Lake property still for sale?

### **City Presents "Delaware Together" Comprehensive Plan**

At long last, the City of Delaware on Jan. 25 launched a draft version of the next comprehensive plan, dubbed "Delaware Together." It supersedes the existing comprehensive plan (2003-2008) that was in dire need of revision to reflect current trends and priorities. The preliminary draft is available at [www.delawaretogether.net](http://www.delawaretogether.net). An updated version is on the agenda of a special work session of the Planning Commission on Wed., March 17 (6:30 pm). ("Community Matters" has not yet had the opportunity to inspect the latest iteration, which was sent out just now.) The plan has 7 chapters, 6 goals, 59 objectives, and 235 action items. In total, there are 237 pages plus various resources devoted to economic development and the housing market. Chapters 1-6 provide the introduction, background information, financial challenges, and framework for future growth and development. Chapter 7 is a deep dive into specific goals, objectives, and actions. Chapter 8, "Implementation," has yet to be written. The draft is intended to express the values and aspirations of the community, but it becomes clear very quickly that "new development" (p. 113) is the highest priority of all. A plurality of objectives (21) are derived from this mantra.

The comprehensive plan does include many goals and actions that deserve praise. 1. "Racial justice" is mentioned and the fact that there are pockets of disinvestment and food deserts in the community. The plan embraces diversity, the inclusion of underrepresented groups, bias training, equity in health outcomes, affordable housing and housing rehabilitation, and heritage festivals. It even mentions the growing homelessness in Delaware, but says nothing about it other than the issue needs to be "studied." 2. The plan also includes a number of "green" objectives such as complete streets, energy efficiency & aggregation, solar panels, green roofs (pictured), mass transit (Delaware Transit Agency & COTA), remediation of brownfields, bicycle & pedestrian corridors,

beautification efforts, community gardens, recycling & composting, cooperation with Preservation Parks, reforestation efforts, and the like. The previous comprehensive plan also mentioned noise pollution and light pollution, but that issue is not addressed in this iteration. Neither blueprint included an action plan for air pollution – something MORPC is very concerned about. There is also no mention of the Delaware County 2019 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. The most glaring omission is any mention of climate change and how that might impact the City of Delaware in the foreseeable future.

The draft contains many features that are worthy of support. However, there are also some serious limitations and deficiencies. For one thing, "the plan is not a legally binding document," and Planning Commission and City Council will have "a central role in its implementation." Translation: city staff, Planning, and Council will do what they have always done – focus on aggressive economic growth and development and ignore the rest. Here is but one illustrative example: In theory, Delaware's ordinances and comprehensive plans protect headwaters, streams, and rivers such as the Delaware Run. That includes appropriate buffer zones and a ban on development in the 100-year floodplain. It all sounds thoughtful and wonderful, but when United Dairy Farmers (UDF) last year submitted a request to demolish and rebuild the store at its current site at the corner of W. William St. and S. Liberty St., city staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council were perfectly happy to support the redevelopment plan although it included the underground piping of another 90 linear feet of the Delaware Run. The current Comprehensive Plan mentions "opportunities to daylight sections of the stream that are piped underground today," but in the case of UDF the exact opposite happened. Hopefully, the Ohio EPA will reject this abomination that runs contrary to every principle of natural law and sustainability. It is not yet too late for UDF to reconfigure its blueprints and relocate the new building away from the Delaware Run. But the UDF project, which was approved by City Council, illuminates the environmental kabuki theater that is often imbedded in comprehensive and strategic plans.

### **Delaware May Be Looking at Road-Impact Fees**

The largest funding source for the City of Delaware is its income tax, currently 1.85%. Almost \$29 million, or 70%, of the City's general fund is derived from the income tax, but it is not enough to maintain and improve the quality of the City's infrastructure, services, and amenities. Because in recent years a proposed income-tax increase was defeated by voters, the Comprehensive Plan 2021 (draft) suggests adopting a road-impact fee instead: "The City should pursue road impact fees and/or other mechanisms that may be used to support new roadway infrastructure that will be required to realize the new development anticipated in this plan."

### **A Bypass for Route 23?**

The City of Delaware's Comprehensive Plan 2021 (draft) mentions the possibility of a bypass for Route 23. One of the objectives in Goal E reads as follows: *"Collaborate with adjacent jurisdictions regarding a potential Route 23 Bypass. Strategic planning has begun for the Route 23 Corridor from the southern Delaware County line to [the] far north of the City. This work is focused on the alleviation of traffic congestion as well as development opportunity. The City should remain actively engaged in ongoing planning, including working closely with the County and surrounding townships as plans move forward. ODOT is in the initial stages of studying alternative routes for bypass travel along this Corridor and the City should be an active participant in this process."* It sounds like the Ohio Dept. of Transportation is already actively studying possible routes for bypass travel. That would have a major impact on the planned development for the "US 23 Corridor" mentioned elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan.

### **City of Delaware Eyes Body Cameras for Police**

The City of Delaware will roll out body cameras for police during the second half of 2021. Police Chief Bruce Pijanowski is currently working on a policy plan, to be approved by City Council later this year, according to a statement made by City Manager Tom Homan during the Feb. 1 work session. It seems that Columbus' recently approved "Andre's Law" would be a good starting point for the upcoming local conversations.



### **Representative from National Lime & Stone Co. to Speak at City Council**

The National Lime and Stone Co. at 2406 S. Section Line Rd. has long irked residents on Delaware's west side. As the city continues to expand farther west, complaints about noisy blasts, earthquake-like tremors, and cracks in homes have increased. Councilmembers Chris Jones (1<sup>st</sup> Ward), Lisa Keller (2<sup>nd</sup> Ward), and Kent Shafer (at-large) are aware of the issue. The extraction company says it wants to be "a good neighbor," but it has done nothing to mitigate the problem. It now appears, however, that the City of Delaware has reached out to the Findlay headquarters of NLS. City Manager Tom Homan announced during the meeting of city council on March 8 that Vice President Chad Doll, in charge of Corporate Relations and Development, has agreed to speak to City Council on Mon., April 12 (7 pm). The meeting will be virtual. The City of Delaware is a major customer of National Lime and Stone Co. In 2020, Public Works acquired material in the amount of \$350,000 from the company. It is therefore unlikely, and would be completely out of character, that the City will make aggressive demands. However, an open dialogue is welcome and perhaps the first step toward finding a solution that's acceptable to both sides.

### **Salvation Army Purchases Church of Hope at 89 Cheshire St.**

In Feb. 2021, the Salvation Army of Ohio purchased the property at 89 Cheshire St. on Delaware's east side from Delaware Church of Hope. To accommodate growth, it plans to add 2,591 additional square feet (for a new total of 6,345 square feet). The blueprints include a new kitchen, restrooms, office space, a food pantry, ADA accessibility, and more. The existing parking lot is to be expanded from 22 to 28 spaces to the north. The new owner is seeking a zoning variance for certain aspects of the project, which is on the agenda of the (virtual) Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) meeting on Wed., March 10 (6:30 pm). The public is invited to submit feedback.

### **Kevin Anderson Speaks to City Council**

Kevin Anderson, apparently a resident of the City of Delaware, addressed City Council via Webex on Feb. 22 and March 8. On Feb. 22, Mr. Anderson protested against Covid-19 lockdowns, mask mandates, and "forced vaccinations." Citizens should be "resistant" to such measures. He called on City Council to make Delaware "a sanctuary" for liberty and freedom. He did not mention that more than 500,000 Americans have died as a result of the pandemic. On March 8, he followed up with even stronger language. It is "tyranny," he said, to force people to shovel their sidewalks in winter or to limit their ability to speak at public meetings to 3 minutes. Individual rights and liberties are curtailed if society goes that road. He also criticized the LGBTQ community and especially the transgender movement as something that is against the laws of God. He once again reiterated that Delaware should become "a sanctuary" for constitutional rights, liberty, and freedom and urged City Council to do what's necessary to achieve that goal. Council listened patiently and politely as Mr. Anderson struggled with technology and poor eyesight, but did not engage in conversation with him.

"Community Matters" knows nothing about Mr. Anderson other than he appears to be a crusty curmudgeon in his 70s who sounds an awful lot like Rush Limbaugh. The City Council agenda and minutes did not provide his address. Some information about a "Kevin Anderson" can be found on the Internet, but it may not be the same man. However, there is a Kevin Anderson who is affiliated with "Minutemen United" in Worthington; the picture and bio on LinkedIn seem to match. It would be easy to dismiss his voice as that of an old crank who is out of touch with the world. Unfortunately, however, he probably speaks for many in Delaware, Ohio, and the nation who deny the reality of Covid-19. It is also interesting to note that Mr. Anderson praises the patriotic virtues of liberty and freedom, but ends up being the tyrant who is eager to deny liberty and freedom to the LGBTQ community and others. Lastly, he ominously spoke of a violent "storm" that's coming (a trope used by QAnon conspiracy theorists). Is he advocating more militant insurgencies and anarchic riots in the style of Jan. 6 to take the country back and make America great again, "regardless of the consequences"? The name of his ministry, "Minutemen United," does not instill confidence that his organization

is committed to peace. Mr. Anderson calls himself a Christian and a patriot, but what he promotes is hate and division.



### **DeVore-Snyder Funeral Home Demolished**

Our roving reporters inform us that the former DeVore-Snyder Funeral Home at 75 W. William St. has been demolished. The rubble was removed during the week of Jan. 25. Many residents are sad to see the beautiful, stately brick building gone. The funeral home moved to 101 Valleyside Dr. on the city's west side a number of years ago and sold the property to Fahey Bank Co., based in Marion. Fahey plans to build a new, 5,000-square-foot full-service office on the site, but delayed implementation for a couple of years due to personnel turnover and other reasons. It appears the company is now ready to proceed. To learn more about the 155-year-old bank, visit [www.faheybank.bank](http://www.faheybank.bank).

### **First Citizens National Bank Coming to Delaware**

As announced in the Jan. issue of "Community Matters," First Citizens National Bank (FCNB) of Upper Sandusky will build a full-service branch office at 33 W. William St. in Delaware. The drive-through location was formerly occupied by First Commonwealth Bank. The existing drive-through and mini-bank will be restored and become part of a much larger new structure, to be built at the corner of W. William and S. Franklin. The Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Commission, and City Council all greenlighted the project.



### **"The Talisman" Wins Several Awards**

"Community Matters" has praised "The Talisman," Hayes High School's student newspaper, in the past. Writers of the publication have now won several "Best of SNO" (School Newspapers Online) awards. SNO helps with technology and training and serves over 3,000 school-paper websites nationally and internationally. It is the largest provider of K-12 and college student news sites in the country. Contributors Andrew Bourget, Noah Sparkman, Amanda Stevens, and Managing Editor Brynn McGrail were recognized for movie and music reviews and articles on local issues. One piece featured Willow Brook residents sharing holiday memories, another one the cutting of majors at OWU. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the paper has been published online only and took the opportunity to improve its website, [www.hayestalisman.com](http://www.hayestalisman.com). Subscription is free.

### **Delaware Gets Veterinary Hospital**

There is currently no veterinary hospital for emergencies and surgeries in the City of Delaware and Delaware County. At the meeting of the Planning Commission on Feb. 3, Dr. James ("Jimmy") Reynolds, DVM indicated that the proposed Central Ohio Mobile Veterinary Surgical Services, LLC at 585 Sunbury Rd. will be Delaware's first veterinary hospital to handle emergencies and surgeries. The new facility will be located in an existing building between Rt. 36/37 East and Bowtown Rd. that currently sits empty. The Planning Commission and City Council unanimously approved the request. Dr. Reynolds graduated from OSU's School of Veterinary Science in 2014 and has worked in various settings around Central Ohio. Upon inquiry, "Community Matters" was told that "the practice will be for canine and feline companions only at this time."

### **Delaware Democratic Party Launches Quarterly Food Drives**

Many families in the City of Delaware and Delaware County suffer from food insecurity. In response, the Delaware County Democratic Party has launched a quarterly food drive. The first one will be held Sat., March 13 (9 am – 12 pm) in the parking lot of Carlisle

Elementary School at 746 W. Central Ave. / Ohio 37 West, near Grady Memorial Hospital. The other dates are Sat., June 5 (Conger Elementary School), Sat., Sept. 4 (Carlisle Elementary School), and Sat., Dec. 4 (Conger Elementary School). The most needed items are non-perishable foods, cereal, laundry detergent, and dishwashing liquid.



### **Arts Castle & Gallery 22**

The current one-person exhibition at the Arts Castle is by Karen Everhart, an artist whose home town is Willard, Ohio (Huron County). She studied at Ohio Univ. and now lives in Delaware. Her paintings, which use a traditional style, focus on the natural world and include rural scenes, creeks, animals, and flowers. However, she is also a talented portraitist of people. A 6-minute virtual video tour is available on the Arts Castle's website. – From March 5 until April 19, Steven Long has a solo exhibition at Gallery 22, located at 22 E. Winter St. Entitled "A Different Perspective," it features bold, abstract paintings. Long is originally from Marion, Ohio and says he has always painted "in abstraction." Gallery 22 is open Fridays and Saturdays from 6-8:30 pm.

### **News about Boardman Arts Park**

The Ohio Senate recently congratulated the Boardman Arts Park for receiving a \$5,000 grant from "A Community Thrives" (USA Today / Gannett Foundation) to convert the former basketball courts at 154 W. William St. into a green space with flowerbeds, arts pieces, and a water feature. The undated letter was signed by Senate President Matt Huffman and Sen. Andrew Brenner, 19<sup>th</sup> District. Boardman Arts Park has also received a gift of \$750 from Meijer Store #249 toward the kickoff of the park's "Imagination Project." The vision for 2021 is to convert the aging basketball courts on the north side into a lush green space with fun, interactive art pieces throughout. The space will feature raised flowerbeds with benches, a wildflower maze, small trees, lighting, a water feature, and a children's play area. The park is named after educator Ruth Boardman who served as principal of the Ruth Boardman Elementary School from 1931 to 1961. The school was razed in 1979, and the land is owned by the City of Delaware. To learn more, visit [www.boardmanartspark.org](http://www.boardmanartspark.org) or follow the park on Facebook or Instagram.

### **2021 Farmer's Market**

Main Street Delaware has announced on its website that the 2021 Farmer's Market season will run from Sat., May 22 through Sat., Oct. 30 in downtown Delaware. Once again, SourcePoint will provide Delaware County residents ages 55 and older with vouchers to purchase fresh fruits & vegetables and honey. Stay tuned for more information.

### **2021 Arts Festival Canceled**

The Delaware Arts Festival board decided Feb. 11 to cancel the 2021 festival amid ongoing uncertainty and concerns for the health and safety of artists, patrons, sponsors, and volunteers. The Arts Festival will return to downtown Delaware May 14-15, 2022. Jury fees already paid by exhibitors are being rolled over to the 2022 event. The nonprofit Arts Festival not only puts on the annual show, it also awards grants to high-school-senior art students and to countywide schools for art projects. For more info, visit [www.delawareartsfestival.org](http://www.delawareartsfestival.org) or its Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/delaware-arts-festival](https://www.facebook.com/delaware-arts-festival)).

### **Big Lots Is "Coming Soon" to the Delaware Shopping Center**

Big Lots, currently located 2081 U.S. 23 N, is "coming soon" to the old Kroger store and former Pat Catan's store in the Delaware Shopping Center at 159 S. Sandusky St. in Delaware, just south of the OWU campus. Repairs were made to the interior and exterior of the building, and temporary signage is up. Shelf units were installed on the inside and have been stocked with products. Pat Catan's encompassed 33,000 square feet, and it looks like Big Lots will use all of the space. Job openings for 55 positions were posted in January. It's not clear when the grand opening will be. One worker there told us it would be "at the end of the month." Regardless, Big Lots is definitely moving to the new location during the first quarter of 2021 as its old lease at US 23 N will have expired by April 1.

### **A Hazardous-Waste Facility on London Road**

Ranco North America at 555 London Rd. is closed, but continues to be on a post-closure monitoring plan under the supervision of the Ohio EPA. Official documents say that the cleanup at the former manufacturing plant is "complete" and the groundwater pollution "controlled," but Schneider Electric, Inc. recently filed a petition that would extend remediation and post-closure care. Other documents speak of "toxic chemicals" at the site. "Community Matters" will investigate further and report back in the near future.

### **10 Largest Employers within the City of Delaware**

- Ohio Health 1,500 – healthcare
- Kroger Distribution Center 1,100 – logistics
- Ohio Wesleyan University 600 – education
- Advance Auto 400 – logistics
- Vertiv 350 – research & development
- PPG Industries 330 – manufacturing
- Domtar / AHP 300 – manufacturing
- Jegs Automotive 250 – headquarters / administration
- Liberty Castings 230 – foundry
- International Paper 175 – manufacturing

[Source: Comprehensive Plan 2021. The numbers are based on data from 2019 and may no longer be accurate. For example, OWU has downsized significantly over the past 2 years and no longer employs 600 people.)

### **Domtar Sells Personal Care Division**

Domtar Personal Care has a new owner. American Industrial Products (AIP) has agreed to take over Domtar's personal-care business for \$920 million. The deal is expected to close in the first quarter of 2021. Domtar is a company with 17 manufacturing facilities worldwide. The local Domtar plant at 2332 Rt. 42 S. produces baby diapers & training pants and employs some 300 people. It's too early to tell what effect the transition will have on employees and products. With the sale, Domtar is refocusing its portfolio around paper, pulp, and packaging to improve "profitability and shareholder value," according to Domtar's President and CEO John D. Williams. It will, however, stay in the hygiene, tissue & towel market. Visit [www.americanindustrial.com](http://www.americanindustrial.com) to learn more about AIP.



*Mary Rose, painted by Jeremy Rosario*

### **Jeremy Rosario Creates Portraits of Residents**

Local painter Jeremy Rosario has started to paint a series of compassionate portraits that depict ordinary Delaware residents. The artist hails from Puerto Rico where people have suffered for centuries from natural disasters, colonialism, and poverty. Bilingual Rosario works as a medical translator at the local Grace Clinic. Listening to the stories of humble folks, he has observed that pain and suffering can translate into dignity and honor, resilience and wisdom. The goal of the series is to create "a tapestry of these beautiful, amazing people"

who often live in the shadows and on the margins of society. A dozen of his paintings are currently on display at "Gallery 2001" inside OWU's Beeghly Library now. A full-fledged exhibition of the works of Jeremy and Debra Rosario will be featured by Gallery 22 from May 7 through June 19 under the title "The Salt of the Earth." Rosario hopes to compile the portraits into a book, along with the words of advice and wisdom that people have given him. – If you are curious about the artist, Jeremy Rosario (Maldonado) is on Facebook where you can see a lot of his portraits. He also accepts commissioned work, incl. beloved pets such as dogs and cats.

### **Rutherford B. Hayes Gets Own Bobblehead**

Rutherford B. Hayes, 19<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. (1877-81), was "neglected" for many years by the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum in Milwaukee, but he and 17 other presidents are neglected no more. Collectors and history buffs can now purchase an 8-inch RBH bobblehead for \$30 apiece and the entire set of 18 "neglected presidents" for \$500. Orders can be made on the hall of fame's website ([www.bobbleheadhall.com](http://www.bobbleheadhall.com)); Hayes will ship in May. – Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893) was born in Delaware, Ohio on a site that is now the BP gas station at 17 E. William St. His presidential library is located in Fremont, Ohio.

### **2021 Delaware Great Decisions**

Delaware's 2021 Great Decisions sessions on U.S. foreign policy and international relations kicks off Fri., March 12. There will be a total of 8 virtual sessions addressing critical issues impacting the nation and the world. Each lecture lasts from 12 to 1 pm. The community is invited to join the online Zoom discussions by registering in advance at <https://delawaregreatdecisions.com>. Those who register will receive a program link each week by email. Once registered for one program, you are preregistered for all.

- Fri., March 12 – Persian Gulf Security Issues: Ali Akbar Mahdi, lecturer for the Department of Sociology, California State Univ., Northridge, and OWU professor emeritus;
- Fri., March 19 – Brexit & the European Union: Yannis Stivachtis, prof. of political science and Jean Monnet Chair at Virginia Tech.;
- Fri., March 26 – Struggles over the Melting Arctic: Nathan Amador Rowley, OWU, and Erinn Nicley, Western Governors Univ.;
- Fri., April 09 – China's Role in Africa: Joe Parrot, OSU
- Fri., April 16 – The Korean Peninsula: Mitchell B. Lerner, OSU
- Fri., April 23 – Roles of International Organizations in a Global Pandemic: Gillian Ice, Ohio Univ.
- Fri., April 30 – The End of Globalization?: Melissa Pawlikowski, Capital Univ.;
- Thurs., May 6 – Global Supply Chains & National Security: Ji Young Choi, OWU.

## **OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY & HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **OWU's Spring 2021 Academic Calendar**

OWU delayed the start of its Spring 2021 semester until Wed., Feb. 3. Initially, there was remote instruction only. In-person instruction resumed Mon., Feb. 15. Spring break has been cancelled, but there will be micro-breaks of 2 days each in March, April, and May. The last day of classes is Wed., May 19, followed by a week of final exams. The term ends Wed., May 26. Commencement is scheduled for Sat., May 29.

### **OWU Announces 2021 Sagan National Colloquium**

OWU has announced its 2021 Sagan National Colloquium speaker series, titled "The Intersection of the Liberal Arts and Business." This year's director is Prof. Matt Vollrath in the Dept. of Economics & Business. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all presentations will be held online. The spring lectures cover a wide spectrum of topics: nature, geography, science, race, women, literature, theology, sports, and more. The complete schedule can be found at [www.owu.edu/snc](http://www.owu.edu/snc). Pre-registration is required for each

virtual lecture at the same site. The lecture series continues in March with several online presentations on artificial intelligence (3/2), racial integration (3/18), Black entrepreneurship (3/22), the role of religion (3/25), and women in entrepreneurship (3/29). The colloquium lectures begin at 7 pm and last for an hour. Pre-registration is required for each virtual lecture at [www.owu.edu/snc](http://www.owu.edu/snc).

### **Spanish Film Festival at OWU**

From March 1 through March 17, OWU is hosting a free Spanish film festival under the title "The Agitated Gaze: An Approach to Chus Gutiérrez' Cinema." Gutiérrez, born in 1962, is a Spanish director, writer, and actress who has lived both in Europe and the U.S. Her films are known for discussing topics such as migration, globalization, and multiculturalism. Movies shown include "Retorno a Hansala," "Porro on the Roof," "Merry Go Round," "Role & Role," and "Sacromonte." The filmmaker will conduct a virtual masterclass on Wed., March 17 (2:30-3:30 pm); the event will be in English. Registration is required. For more info, contact Dr. Eva Paris-Huesca ([eparish@owu.edu](mailto:eparish@owu.edu)).

### **New Exhibits at Ross Art Museum**

The latest exhibition at OWU's Ross Art Museum is called "Cityscape / Landscape" (Feb. 3 through April 8). It features works by printmaker Amze Emmons, a 1996 OWU graduate who today is a professor of Creative Art at Temple Univ. in Philadelphia. To learn more about him, visit [www.amzeemmons.com](http://www.amzeemmons.com). A Google search brings up countless items. In addition, contemporary and historic landscape scenes by 5 different photographers are on display in the back room. The Ross is open to in-person visitors T/W/F 10 am – 5 pm, Thurs. 10 am – 9 pm, and Sun. from 1-5 pm. It is closed Sat. and Mon. The museum is located at 60 S. Sandusky St., handicap-accessible, and always free. Visitors must follow health guidelines and wear masks during the Covid-19 pandemic. Once created, a virtual version of the exhibit will also be available. To learn more, visit [www.owu.edu/ross](http://www.owu.edu/ross).

### **"Moving Bodies and Social Justice" at OWU**

OWU is offering a series of online workshops and speakers this spring designed to educate and engage all bodies who want to move within the dance community. Titled "Moving Bodies and Social Justice," the free virtual events are being created in collaboration with dance faculty from the Five Colleges of Ohio, which includes OWU, Oberlin, Kenyon, Denison, and Wooster. OWU dance instructor Rashana Perks Smith, M.F.A., said the workshops are intended to help students examine the systems in which they study and perform as well as to help them create support systems for themselves as body-conscious dancers. The event schedule is as follows:

7 p.m. Feb. 18 – Naomi Macalalad Bragin presents "Black Power of Hip Hop Dance: On Kinesthetic Politics." Bragin, Ph.D., teaches courses in performance studies, critical race and gender studies, and dance at the Univ. of Washington Bothell.

7 p.m. Feb. 25 – mayfield brooks presents "A Discourse for De-Composing Dance and Choreographing Breath." brooks, M.F.A., is a movement-based performance artist, vocalist, urban farmer, teacher, and writer living in Brooklyn, N.Y.

7 p.m. March 18 – Sydney L. Mosley and Sharon Udoh participate in a roundtable discussion on "Body Positivity: Radical Self-Love and Social Transformation." The conversation will be moderated by OWU instructor Perks Smith. Mosley, M.F.A., is an award-winning artist-activist and educator from Harlem, New York. She produces experiential dance works with her collective, SLMDances. Udoh is a queer, first-generation Nigerian-American composer, pianist, vocalist, educator, speaker & cultural critic from Columbus. She has served in residence at the Wexner Center for the Arts at OSU.

7 p.m. April 15 – Thomas F. DeFrantz presents "Making\*Queering\*Dancing." DeFrantz, Ph.D., is a professor of African & African American Studies at Duke Univ. & director of SLIPPAGE: Performance, Culture, Technology, a research group that explores emerging technology in live performance applications.

7 p.m. April 22 – Jaamil Olawale Kosoko presents "The Transgressive Body Workshop." Kosoko, M.A., is a Nigerian-American poet, curator, and performance artist. In fall 2020, he was appointed as the Alma Hawkins Visiting Chair at the UCLA Dept. of World Arts and Cultures / Dance. He also lectures regularly at Princeton Univ.



For more detailed descriptions of the events, presenter biographies, and access to each virtual presentation, visit <https://sites.google.com/oberlin.edu/moving-bodies-social-justice>.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at OWU**

In a memo to the faculty dated Feb. 12, President Rock Jones admitted that student and faculty experiences on the OWU campus "are not equitable, and all too often the inequities relate to race and gender. [...] The student body does not reflect the diversity of our nation or region. And it is far from reflecting the diversity of the students who will be looking at colleges in the coming decades." We also know "that students of color persist and graduate at lower rates than White students." And the faculty and staff are "less diverse than a decade ago," when Rock Jones started his presidency. He also asks, why are BIPOC and LGBT faculty and staff not coming to OWU or prematurely leaving with shorter tenures? What and where are the barriers? Rock Jones' observations are accurate. White traditions and cultures are privileged on this campus at the expense of others. An article that Provost Karlyn Crowley recently shared with the faculty noted that white superiority and supremacy is real on many college campuses across the nation. It therefore comes as no surprise that BIPOC and LGBT faculty and staff often feel unwelcome and unsupported. At OWU, too, the recent exodus of Black faculty and staff has been disheartening. Ohio Wesleyan is not a place where all employees sense they are valued and can thrive.

That is the reason why OWU has developed a new "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan" that outlines specific steps. However, as everyone knows, words and deeds are not always in sync. Institutions, agencies, and companies are notorious for saying they are "passionate" about diversity, sustainability, excellence, transparency (or whatever), but then continue as before. In addition, the DEI Plan seems to stand in direct conflict with OWU's highest priority – to recruit and retain students who pay to come here. The university is highly dependent on tuition revenue, but the brutal realities of changing demographics, stagnant and dwindling family incomes, and student indebtedness after graduation pose a gargantuan challenge. Given the exceptionally high discount rate at OWU, net tuition is projected to be flat or decreasing in the foreseeable future. The university is fond of talking about its mission, vision, and proud 180-year-old legacy. But at the end of the day it is always "budget implications" and "budget considerations" that determine the outcome. This was also the case recently when OWU let go some 40 faculty and canceled 18 majors. It is difficult to see how the goal of recruiting and retaining more BIPOC students can be reconciled with the fact that they, on average, show greater financial need. We wish the university luck in threading the needle and squaring the circle.

### **OWU Uses "DFW Rate" to Review of Teachers, Majors & Programs**

During the latest retrenchment phase, OWU has shed some 40 instructors in an effort to reduce the total number of full-time faculty to about 100. One criterion used for the academic review of teachers, majors, and programs was the so-called "DFW rate," which is the percentage of students who receive a "D," "F," or "W" (withdrawal) as their course grade. The DFW rate is information that can count for or against teachers, majors, and programs. A low DFW rate may be seen as a reflection of student satisfaction, a high DFW rate as "evidence" of a teacher's poor performance. What constitutes a disproportionate DFW rate is not defined, however. Is a DFW rate of, let's say, 20% low, normal, or high? That seems to depend on the individual department or institution, and on the subjective and arbitrary view of the evaluator(s). In effect, the policy blackballs and penalizes instructors and departments with rigorous academic standards and rewards those who give lots of "easy A's." Individual instructors are blamed for what really is an institutional failure when schools accept underprepared and/or unmotivated at-risk students who are not college-ready and unlikely to succeed. The recruitment of top-notch students is the job of the Admissions Office. OWU currently has some 400 students in its honor program, but there is also a great number of students who might be described as "marginal." An example of what transpired in 2020/21 is OWU's Geology program, long known for its exacting scientific standards. As the overall population of students shrank to 1,400 and fewer students opted to

take Geology classes, the program suffered and has now been eliminated in its entirety. It is interesting to note that no one ever complains about teachers, majors, and programs that give a disproportionate number of "easy A's." OWU has such "Mickey Mouse" courses with artificially inflated numbers, too. Vulnerable part-time instructors in particular are thus incentivized, indeed pressured, by the system to be lenient and to give less demanding quizzes and more popular grades because a high DFW rate would jeopardize their jobs and careers. If they demanded excellence, they would quickly be without students and without a job.

The DFW policy has multiple pernicious consequences. It undermines the academic authority and freedom of faculty to assign appropriate course grades. It demoralizes those faculty who are serious about offering high-quality content that challenges their students. The quality of instruction is diluted when it is watered down in a race to the bottom. It also cheapens, in the long run, the value of a diploma from OWU. When underperforming students end up graduating from OWU, it sends a signal to employers and graduate schools to be wary. Many high-school counselors have already pegged OWU as an institution that is not particularly selective.

Teachers unions have long demanded that the evaluation, merit and promotion, and job security of their members not be tied to the course grades they assign to students. OWU should also cease to use the DFW rate as a tool to cull teachers, majors, and programs it deems disposable.

### **OWU Explores Increased Use of Online Courses**

Ohio Wesleyan Univ. is part of several regional and national consortiums. Among them is the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) that has 13 members in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. "GLCA chief academic officers are currently exploring using Acadeum for course sharing across campuses," according to a statement from GLCA, which is headquartered in Ann Arbor. Conversations and exploratory projects have been underway for several years in the area of foreign languages, but now the plan is to go "beyond modern languages" and include other disciplines. Acadeum, formerly College Consortium, is a network of more than 200 course-sharing institutions based in Austin, Texas. Several regional colleges are already members, among them Albion, Allegheny, Ohio Northern, and Wittenberg. Course-sharing offers advantages and disadvantages for colleges and universities. For example, it is clearly a plus if students can enroll in courses that are not offered at their home institutions. Pedagogically, however, it is not ideal if students never see their instructors in person. And it is an open question if they are willing to pay full tuition for a truncated experience. Teachers also note that the academic calendar is often not in sync (e.g., semesters vs. trimesters). They worry about losing colleagues if an institution outsources programs. And they wonder how much such courses weigh for purposes of income, evaluation, tenure, and promotion. In addition, there are a myriad questions about the technical and mechanical aspects of remote learning. Most instructors have mixed feelings about course-sharing. It may well be the future of higher education, but there are many things that need to be worked out before the new regime will work as designed.

### **OWU Library System No Longer Wants Book Donations**

It's a sign of the times we live in that OWU's Beeghly Library and its branches have recently made a change in their donation policies. They no longer accept donations of printed books and journals. Reviewing older titles is not time-effective and cost-effective enough, according to OWU's webpage. Staff needs "to focus on the services and collection activities that best support current curriculum and research needs," according to a memo sent by OWU Provost Dr. Karlyn Crowley. Instead, old books should be donated to Goodwill or other charitable organizations. Translation: the library no longer has the appetite and the personnel to maintain a first-rate undergraduate collection and to thoughtfully fill gaps where they exist. It is also clear that the library is increasingly moving away from printed materials in favor of digital material, which takes up less space. If you enter Beeghly Library through the main door, you see computers, but no books. Is a library devoid of books still a "library?" Is this the future of OWU and other colleges? There are already a number of K-12 schools and colleges around the nation that have abandoned printed materials and transitioned to "bookless libraries."

Although much of the nation's cultural heritage is archived in them, books are quickly becoming an endangered species.

### **Retirement at OWU**

Dozens of OWU employees have been pushed into retirement, voluntarily or involuntarily. Wouldn't it be great if the institution provided retiring faculty and staff with guidance and support as many enter uncharted territory? However, the university has done nothing to help folks navigate the steps necessary to ensure a smooth transition. There are no workshops, to-do checklists, or FAQ documents. There is no task force in place. At the moment, there isn't even a director of Human Resources who could answer questions about benefits and procedures. This has been a stressful year for the administration as OWU struggled with the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting economic fallout. However, it does not feel right that OWU ignores the legitimate needs of employees who have, in many cases, dedicated decades of their lives to the institution and who now wonder about their next steps.

### **OWU's Provost Karlyn Crowley Honored by "Diverse"**

During Women's History Month, OWU's provost Dr. Karlyn Crowley was honored by the monthly magazine "Diverse" as one of the nation's top 25 outstanding women in higher education. Crowley became OWU's chief academic officer in July 2020, replacing Chuck Stinemetz. She came to OWU from St. Norbert College in Wisconsin. A current focus of hers is the diversification of OWU's faculty and curriculum, both of which is very "White."

It has consistently been the position of "Community Matters" that OWU as an institution is to be celebrated. Sometimes, however, newly hired people within the government, an organization, or an institution are, well, unfamiliar with the culture and ethos of a place. For example, Dr. Crowley was not familiar with "Robert's Rules of Order," the handbook used to conduct official business at faculty meetings. To this day, her mantra is the superiority of "senior leadership," which ignores the egalitarian and consultative spirit and heritage of OWU. Also, previous provosts were advocates of the faculty, which does not seem to be the case here. External candidates can be an asset, but if you are not an internal candidate (as was the case with previous provosts) the transition period can be challenging, for both sides. As a result of autocratic and norm-shattering missteps, she has alienated quite a few current and retired faculty members. There is uncertainty and fear about status and benefits. Hopefully, over time the fractures will heal and she will become a fully integrated member of the OWU family.



*Salman Toor, "The Singers"*

### **Salman Toor Art Exhibition in New York**

Salman Toor, a 2006 OWU graduate, currently has his first solo exhibition in Manhattan's prestigious Whitney Museum of American Art. The show is running from Nov. 13 through April 4. (The museum is open to the public, with Covid-19 restrictions in place. Visitors must book timed tickets in advance.) Toor was born in Lahore, Pakistan and studied Art at Ohio Wesleyan Univ. before getting his MFA at Pratt Institute in 2009. The New York Times has called his work "brilliant" and the artist a rising "star." His oil paintings are autobiographical in nature and depict figurative people – often young gay men with brown skin trying to make it in an inhospitable world where they are marginalized by society and sometimes even by their

own families. They live in the diaspora, in the interstitial and liminal spaces between continents, cultures, and languages. As noted in the essay by curatorial assistant Ambika Trasi, "Toor's characters stand in doorways, on thresholds, or in places of transit; they are unhomed, in a state of displacement." They also live in the twilight zone between legality and criminality, inclusion and exclusion since to this day there are few protections for LGBT people in the world. Each picture tells a story. In one painting, a suspicious border official pries open a suitcase. "Nightmare" shows the protagonist lying in an alley, stripped, his violent assailants towering over him. Toor's multiethnic protagonists are isolated and lonely, fragile and vulnerable. In many paintings, his protagonists are in the presence of cellphones and laptops (e.g., "Bar Boy"), which appear to be more devices of alienation rather than communication. But Toor does not only show pain and suffering. There is also celebration of solidarity, companionship, tenderness, and intimacy although it might be an overstatement to say that Toor's characters are happy. – The artist has recently joined the gallery Lühring Augustine, which will open another exhibition of his work in the next few years.

### **OWU Performs Georg Büchner's "Woyzeck"**

Graduating senior Logan Kovach, who is a Theater major and a German minor, has translated and adapted "Woyzeck," a dramatic fragment by German writer Georg Büchner (1813-1837). The protagonist, Franz Woyzeck, is a poor and exploited man. When his wife commits adultery, he snaps and kills her. There is also an opera by Alban Berg and a movie by Werner Herzog based on Büchner's play. Kovach has modernized the work, which now depicts "the plight of everyday workers." The haunted figure of Woyzeck is convincingly played by Maxwell Haupt, a junior. There will be 2 in-person performances of the social drama on Fri., March 5 and Sat., March 6 (8 pm) in OWU's Chappel Drama Center. The audience will be limited and masks are required. A recorded performance will also be made available, with the link TBA.

### **Callia Barwick: 2021 Ohio Miss United States Agriculture**

OWU fresh(wo)man Callia J. Barwick '24 was recently named Ohio Miss United States Agriculture. Barwick, 19, is from Canfield, Ohio and a 2020 graduate of Canfield High School near Youngstown. At OWU, she studies history and pre-law and plans to become an agricultural attorney. She has been involved in 4-H projects since childhood, showing horses, goats, and dogs. In June, she will travel to Florida to compete for the national title of Miss United States Agriculture. Participation in the program involved completion of many community-service projects and efforts to promote agriculture. For more info about the pageant, visit [www.missagricultureusa.org](http://www.missagricultureusa.org).

### **OWU's Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI)**

Growing a garden. Becoming a citizen scientist. Reforming health care. Becoming an antiracist. Online classes on these topics and others are being offered this spring for adults 55 and older through OWU's Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI). For a flat fee of \$75, Delaware County residents are able to take as many courses as they wish during the spring session, which begins the week of March 15. For safety reasons, all spring classes will be held online via Zoom. The classes are taught in a non-competitive environment by volunteers, including Ohio Wesleyan professors, practitioners, and others. Scheduled courses include: \*The Long Road to Health Care Reform, \*How Does Your Garden Grow?, \*Become a Citizen Scientist!, \*LLI Potpourri (featuring a variety of topics, incl. solar power, the "Cityscape / Landscape" exhibit at the Ross Art Museum, the Ohio Literary Trail, and Pet Tales), \*Strangers in a Strange Land: Immigrants and Refugees, \*The Role of the First Lady, \*Healthy U: Chronic Pain Self-Management, and \*How to Be an Antiracist (part 2: Theory into Practice). Online, mail & telephone registration for the spring session opened Feb. 8 and ran through March 5. Thanks to a grant from SourcePoint, the LLI was able to offer a limited number of \$50 scholarships this spring. Scholarship applications were due Feb. 17. Visit [www.owu.edu/LLI](http://www.owu.edu/LLI) for additional class descriptions (including dates, times & instructors), scholarship applications, and online registration. Confirmation of course registration was sent to each paid registrant. For questions, contact the Lifelong Learning Institute at [lli@owu.edu](mailto:lli@owu.edu) or (740) 368-3078.



**Perkins Observatory**  
**New Vistas in Astronomy**  
**2021 Adult Lecture Series**

Perkins Observatory ([www.owu.edu/perkins](http://www.owu.edu/perkins)) at US 23 South has many public programs. All of them are virtual at this time. The "New Vistas in Astronomy" series meets on one Thursday night each month at 8 pm and is geared toward a more adult audience. OSU and OWU professors discuss their current research and any new findings in their area of expertise. Tickets are \$10 for each lecture. Tickets for the entire series are available at a discount. Please call and purchase tickets in advance at 740-363-1257. Perkins has a capacity of 80 guests.

- Jan. 21: Sultana Nahar, "Opening a Door of Knowledge by Gravitational Waves"
- Feb. 11: Jennifer Johnson, "Willy Fowler and the Nucleus of Carbon"
- March 18: Michael Stamatikos, "Legacy of the Hubble Telescope"
- April 15: Marc Pinsonneault, "Double Trouble – Interacting Binary Stars"
- May 13: Todd Thompson, "Black Holes Near and Far"
- June 10: Annika Peter, "Dark Matters"
- July 15: David Martin, "The Hunt for Alien Worlds"
- Aug. 12: "Rick Pogge, "Meet Our New Robot Masters – The Sloan Robotic Fiber Positioning System"
- Sept. 16: Ji Wang, "Searching for Life on Other Planets"
- Oct. 14: Paul Martini, "Unraveling the Mystery of Cosmic Acceleration"
- Nov. 11: Christopher Kochanek, TBA
- Dec. 9: Don Terndrup, "Our Little Home in the Milky Way"

**Early Childhood Center Accepts Registration for 2021/22**

OWU's Early Childhood Center at 37 Park Ave. is now accepting registrations for the 2021/22 school year. The ECC is a preschool for children ages 3 to 5. Children of OWU faculty and staff receive priority placement. For more info, contact Director Kellie Hall at [klhall@owu.edu](mailto:klhall@owu.edu) or call 740-368-3935. A 6-minute introductory video is available on the ECC's website. We know of at least one local family that did not send their daughter to ECC (and opted for Methesco / MTSO instead) because their safety concerns were not addressed upfront. It is not our job to reassure the public, but our understanding is that security is tight and staff and student assistants are carefully screened. ECC children appear to be in good hands.

**OSU Goals: Debt-Free BAs and More BIPOC Faculty**

In her first State of the University address, OSU President Kristina M. Johnson laid out her vision for the university that is accessible for everyone. Among the highlights are 1) the goal of "a zero-debt bachelor's degree." The average Buckeye student graduates with \$27,000 in debt, according to the Columbus Dispatch. Johnson did not explain how she would achieve the goal, but it comes at a time when the Biden administration is also discussing on the national level how to reduce and perhaps even forgive some student debt. 2. Another highlight of her speech was the announcement that OSU would hire a minimum of 350 new tenure-track faculty members. While undergraduate enrollment has increased, the number of tenure-track faculty has significantly decreased in the same time period. 150 of these new faculty members will be hired as part of OSU's DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) initiative. The initiative targets BIPOC minorities (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) as well as scientists, scholars, and artists whose work addresses social equity and racial disparities.

**Athletics Is Big Business at OSU**

During the 2019/20 fiscal year, OSU's athletic department brought in \$233.9 million, an increase of 11% over fiscal 2018/19. The latest fiscal year ended June 30, 2020 and was only marginally impacted by Covid-19. The increase was due to a rise in ticket sales (\$66 million), donations (\$48.2 million), and licensing, advertising & sponsorships (\$30.8 million). For the current fiscal year, Athletic Director Gene Smith expects a deficit. – OSU is a major academic

institution of national and international renown. In a recent op-ed piece written for the "Columbus Dispatch," President Kristina M. Johnson emphasized the primacy of excellence. She did not mention sports at all. It is curious, then, to see that in the public perception OSU is primarily an athletic powerhouse and only secondarily an institution of higher education and research. There is a disconnect somewhere.

**BGSU Student from Delaware Dies after Hazing Incident**

Another hazing incident has led to the death of a Delaware County student. Stone Foltz, a 2019 graduate from Buckeye Valley High School, was hospitalized on March 4 after drinking "a copious amount of alcohol" as a new pledge of the Pi Kappa Alpha International Fraternity at Bowling Green State Univ. He died on March 7. At Buckeye Valley, Foltz played multiple sports. The business major was 20 years old. His organs will be donated to help save the lives of others. The fraternity was immediately suspended and is no longer recognized as a registered student organization. The national organization followed suit and may permanently suspend the chapter pending the outcome of the investigation. However, during student protests there were calls for BGSU President Rodney K. Rogers to resign for allowing the "dangerous practices" of Greek in the first place. Foltz' death comes one week after Adam Oakes died at Virginia Commonwealth Univ. as a result of hazing. In 2018, Ohio Univ. student Collin Wiant from Dublin died during a hazing ritual, but in December the Senate Education Committee allowed an anti-hazing bill named "Collin's Law" (House Bill 310) to stall. Currently, hazing is a 4<sup>th</sup>-degree misdemeanor in Ohio. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine says "there needs to be zero tolerance for hazing." The latest information available suggests "Collin's Law" is being reintroduced in the Ohio Senate in revised form. If passed, it would expand the definition of hazing to include the forced consumption of drugs and alcohol and make it a felony.

At OWU, President Rock Jones reaffirmed the school's "zero-tolerance policy" as far as hazing is concerned. All active and new fraternity and sorority members sign anti-hazing pledges. In addition, there are anti-hazing webinars and workshops. However, Dr. Jones also noted that OWU will have a campus environment free from hazing only if students themselves make that choice. There is a thing called "personal responsibility." If and when hazing occurs, students need to know that they have the option of walking away. They do not have to subject themselves to unsafe, unhealthy, and degrading treatment. While Stone Foltz was clearly victimized by his fraternity, he could have declined the alcohol and found better friends elsewhere on campus.

**Bexley Student Found Dead at American University**

Elias ("Eli") D. Weinstock, a 20-year-old student from Bexley, died unexpectedly at American Univ. in Washington, D.C., on March 3. The 2019 graduate from Bexley High School was a sophomore majoring in marketing and communications. It is not clear what led to his untimely death. He had no underlying health issues. However, the Dispatch reported that he was new member of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity (the same fraternity Stone Foltz joined) and had gone out with his fraternity brothers for a "happy hour." Metropolitan Police in Washington has so far not said whether Weinstock was impaired or injured. – A private graveside funeral service was held March 7, according to his obituary.

**Ohio Univ. Will Hold In-Person Commencement**

Ohio Univ. in Athens has decided to hold in-person commencement ceremonies this spring. However, they will be spread out over 5 days between April 29 and May 3, and students are only permitted to bring 2 guests into Peden Stadium. Ceremonies will be streamlined live for all others and those who prefer to participate virtually. – Most other schools around the state have yet to decide the format of their spring commencements.

**College Campuses Offer Food Pantries**

It is a common misconception that college and university students have a lot of money if their parents can afford to send them to school. Many are poor and suffer from food insecurity, according to national surveys. The Chronicle of Higher Education reported in 2015 that the rate of food insecurity among students was "much higher"

than the rates for the general population. The Covid-19 pandemic has only worsened the situation despite the fact that since December certain college students are now eligible to temporarily receive SNAP benefits (food stamps). In response, many Central Ohio schools have created on-campus food pantries and programs to support students. Among them are Capital Univ., Columbus State Community College, Ohio State Univ., Otterbein Univ., and Denison Univ. Institutions have started to realize that pantries can serve as important recruitment and retention tools. The pantry at Columbus State Community College, in existence since 2019, resembles actually a traditional grocery store, with aisles of staples, produce, and coolers for dairy products and meat. The Mid-Ohio Market is open to the entire community. Only about 20% of the customers are students. People from anywhere can visit as often they wish. Other colleges limit access to their food pantries to enrolled students and employed staff.

Ohio Wesleyan used to have a small shelf with food items up on the third floor of the Hamilton-Williams Campus Center as part of the Chaplain's Office. However, it seems to have fallen to the wayside after the retirement of Rev. Jon Powers. The university or its student government (WCSA) should reinstitute such a food pantry, find a central place for it on an easily accessible ground floor, and stock it with items of nutritional value. The university is currently clearly focused on creating housing options for wealthy students who can afford to pay top dollars for "apartment-style living" (Bradford-Milligan Hall), but the majority of students do not fit that category.

### **Student Sues Texas University System over Online Courses**

A University of Texas student, Anissa Reyes, is suing the UT System Board of Regents and its chairman, Kevin Eltife. The lawsuit claims that online courses were "subpar" compared to in-person courses. It alleges that students paid tuition for a first-rate educational experience but received an insufficient and inferior product instead, which constitutes a breach of contract. Students were denied access to classrooms, laboratories, libraries, cultural venues, and recreational facilities. "Students have been deprived of the opportunity for collaborative learning and in-person dialogue, feedback, and critique," the lawsuit contends. Student organizations were "substantially curtailed, cancelled, or effectively cancelled." Reyes is asking for a partial tuition refund. The UT System charged full tuition for both the fall 2020 and the spring 2021 semester. Similar lawsuits are pending in other states.

### **Cornel West Denied Tenure at Harvard**

A nationally known African-American professor and political activist, Dr. Cornel West, was denied tenure at Harvard Univ. In interviews, he criticized the "hypocrisy and dishonesty at Harvard" and said he felt "disrespected and devalued." The university claims it is committed to the success of its Black faculty, but Black and Latino professors are underrepresented in the ranks of tenured professors. Dr. West indicated that he does not know why his request to be considered for tenure was rebuffed, but he suspects that his age (67) and his support for the Palestinian cause had something to do with it. Dr. West has since accepted a tenured position at Union Theological Seminary in New York where he was awarded the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Chair. He will be teaching a wide variety of subjects in philosophy, politics, cultural theory, and literature. Union, founded nearly 200 years ago, attracts not only Christian students but also Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and other faiths.

### **Academic Freedom Alliance Formed**

Academic freedom is increasingly under attack. There is a growing intolerance of differing viewpoints on both the left and the right. More than 200 scholars from around the country have now formed the nonprofit Academic Freedom Alliance (AFA). Its mission is to help college educators "to speak, instruct, and publish without fear of sanction, bullying, punishment, or persecution" and to provide legal support to faculty whose academic freedom is threatened. Princeton's Dr. Keith E. Whittington, who chairs the alliance's academic committee, says the alliance would be "narrowly focused on free speech and academic-freedom issues." Members range from Cornel West, a Bernie Sanders supporter, to Carol Swain, a backer of Donald Trump. To learn more, visit [www.academicfreedom.org](http://www.academicfreedom.org).

### **More Colleges Shut Down**

A growing list of colleges and universities in the U.S. are shutting down. They weathered the Civil War, WWI, and WW II, but now they are falling prey to the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. Urbana Univ. in Ohio and MacMurray College in Illinois closed in 2020. Concordia College in New York and Holy Family College in Wisconsin have announced that they are shutting down at the end of this academic year. All took a significant hit from Covid-19 that made an already tough financial situation untenable for them. Small schools with low endowments are particularly vulnerable. Experts have no doubt that more colleges will follow suit and either shut down or merge with other schools in the foreseeable future.

## **DELAWARE COUNTY & CENTRAL OHIO**

### **Public Library Open**

All branches of the Delaware County District Library are open as of March 1 for walkthrough browsing and computer access. Safety protocols apply. Patrons must wear masks, practice social distancing, and are asked to limit their time on computers and inside buildings to one hour. Business hours for the main library are: M/W/F & Sat., 9 am – 5 pm, Tues. / Thurs., 11 am – 7 pm. Curbside service remains available during the same hours. More info can be found at [www.delawarelibrary.org](http://www.delawarelibrary.org).

### **Free Rides to Covid-19 Vaccination Sites**

*"Delaware County Transit is excited to inform you that we will be providing free transportation to individuals wanting to get the COVID-19 vaccination. Please feel free to share this information with your staff / agency, folks you may work with, neighbors, family members & friends. Here are a few things to keep in mind: No drive-thru. Must be a site transportation arranged in advance. Both trip ends must be in Delaware County – no out-of-county trips. Must be during our normal hours of operation (hours of operation Mon. – Fri., 6 am – 6 pm, current period ends July 31, 2021). Please reach out to me if you have any questions."* – Tonya Layman, Mobility Manager, Delaware County Transit, 740-513-2207. Trips must be scheduled by at least noon the day before and can be scheduled up to 2 weeks in advance. Call 740-363-3355 or visit [www.delcotransit.com](http://www.delcotransit.com) to schedule a ride.

### **Democratic Party Hosts Forum on Antiracism**

On Feb. 10, the Delaware County Democratic Party offered an online forum on "Antiracism: What Can We Do in Delaware County?" More than 80 people participated in the Zoom meeting that featured Ruchelle Pride (SWCI), Tamika Vinson Reid (DAAHC), and Rev. Michael Curtis. The host was Andre Washington, the recently elected Vice Chair of the Ohio Democratic Party. Speakers noted that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are an under-represented and underserved group in the City of Delaware and Delaware County. To this day, the community is impacted by a long, toxic legacy of structural, institutional, endemic racism. Only 100 years ago, the KKK had a strong presence. Redlining continues to exist in practice ("no people of color north of Central Avenue"). There are food deserts and pockets of poverty. Lack of mass transit is a problem. Many Black families do not shop in downtown Delaware, are fearful of law enforcement, or are otherwise disengaged from the decision-making process. Pastor Curtis mentioned that Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America as Whites and Blacks go to their own churches.

The forum did a good job describing some of the inequities in the city and county. However, when host Andre Washington raised the question about "actionable items," the responses were limited to book recommendations. Books and education are essential tools, but more concrete suggestions would have been welcome. For example, the City of Delaware is currently finalizing its next comprehensive plan, which does have a certain emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Public comments continue to be welcome until adoption, but the plan was not mentioned once at the forum. For real change to occur, actionable items must be identified and addressed. The next step would be to build budgets and establish timelines. Without such assertiveness, little will happen. Still, it was good to have the forum,

which helped raise awareness of the issues, and "Community Matters" is grateful to the Delaware County Democratic Party for organizing the event.

### **Polaris Mall Evacuated after Gunfire Exchange**

Gunfire was exchanged on Wed., March 3 inside Polaris Fashion Place, and the mall was evacuated for the remainder of the day. Six or more shots were fired, but nobody was killed or injured. The suspects remain at large, but police say that the identity of at least one of them is known and urged them to turn themselves in. Any charges against them would be filed in Delaware County. According to eyewitnesses, the shooting started inside Carter's Oshkosh B'gosh children's clothing store, near JCPenney, on the upper level, when two young men exchanged gunfire. Multiple shell casings and one weapon were recovered. More than 50 police officers from Columbus, Worthington, Genoa Township, Franklin County, Delaware County, and other jurisdictions responded. By 3:30 pm, the entire mall was evacuated. It reopened the next day, with increased police presence.

### **Andrew Brenner Named Chair of Education Committee**

Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) has appointed Andrew Brenner (R-Powell) to serve as chair of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Additionally, he serves on the Insurance, Finance, Energy & Public Utilities, and Rules & Reference committees. Brenner represents the 19<sup>th</sup> Ohio Senate District, which encompasses all or part of Delaware, Franklin, and Knox counties. Brenner is a far-right conservative politician who in the past has compared public schools to "socialism." In 2014, his political opponent David Hogan stated that Brenner is "a firm opponent to public education." At one point, his priority was to mandate cursive writing at elementary schools. In 2020, his wife, Sara Marie Brenner, compared Ohio's Covid-19 health orders to Hitler's Germany. Her remarks were widely condemned by both Democrats and Republicans, but Andrew Brenner did not distance himself from them. Instead, he cited an early study that indicated that Ohio would face only 5,991 coronavirus cases. In reality, the state is closing in on 1 million cases, and over 17,500 have died. While Brenner has done this and that for Delaware County, the senator and his spouse are an embarrassment to the county. He needs to be voted out. – Update: It did not take Brenner long to introduce new legislation (Senate Bill 111) that designates \$154.8 million for Ohio's private schools. The amount represents 22.6% of the total money (\$837.9 million) that goes to Ohio's public and private schools. According to statistics we have seen, only about 12% of Ohio students are enrolled in private schools. Of course, government has an obligation to help all schools, but under Brenner's plan private schools, incl. charter schools, benefit disproportionately, at the expense of public schools.

### **BIA Parade of Homes Returns in Fall**

After a 1-year hiatus, the annual BIA Parade of Homes will return to Central Ohio in a new format this year. Visitors will see two major changes: First of all, the event will be held from Sept. 25 through Oct. 10 in multiple locations throughout the Columbus metro area. A final list of participating homes and communities is not yet available, but in addition to a small number of multi-million-dollar luxury homes the new parade will also feature more attainable single-family homes, patio homes, and condominiums. The Building Industry Association (BIA) of Central Ohio has long been criticized for showcasing unaffordable "dream homes" that builders then struggled to sell. The BIA has made a deliberate decision to return to its roots and "to connect home buyers with homebuilders," as BIA Executive Director Jon Melchi put it. The recently installed 2021 president Jeff Yates has also stated that the BIA wants to make homes "as accessible to homebuyers as possible." The 2021 Parade of Homes will also feature virtual tours of the homes at [www.biaparade.com](http://www.biaparade.com).

### **Franklin County Expands Family-Leave Program**

The Franklin County Commissioners have expanded the family-leave program for the nearly 1,400 employees of the system. The new policy allows county workers to take up to 8 weeks of paid leave for family events such as childbirth, adoption, care for seriously ill family members, quarantine, and for medical treatment due to Covid-19. The previous policy was limited to 2 weeks per year. The

Commissioners pointed out, correctly, that the new benefit is "standard in every other industrialized country." The U.S. is a complete outlier when it comes to paid family leave. The Commissioners also expect positive outcomes for the county in terms of worker satisfaction, recruitment of top talent, and retention of staff. Other Ohio counties will now have to up the ante if they wish to stay competitive.

### **Columbus Dismisses Police Chief Thomas Quinlan**

Columbus is once again looking for a new police chief after Mayor Andrew Ginther dismissed Chief Tom Quinlan. In a video statement released Jan. 28, Ginther indicated that "Columbus residents have lost faith in him and in the division's ability to change on its own." Deputy Chief Mike Woods will serve as interim chief while the city conducts another national search. The decision comes after Columbus police officers Jason Meade and Adam Coy shot and killed two unarmed Black men in two separate incidents. Critics of Quinlan, 54, noted that there was little transparency and accountability in the police department, comprised of some 1,900 officers, and questioned if he was really in control or the powerful police union. Despite promises, the police chief never acted as an agent of change and transformational figure. If there was an effort to change the police culture from within, it was not visible from the outside. As described by "Community Matters" in its Jan. 2020 issue, Columbus should have gone with finalist Perry Tarrant instead of Quinlan. Faith leaders and the Black community expressed profound frustration and disappointment back then and said the choice of Quinlan represented "a continuation of the same old repressive regime" and an institutional failure. It was Mayor Ginther who made the fatal decision back then to hire Quinlan, so he has only himself to blame for the reputational crisis (and lawsuits) that Columbus is facing now.

### **City of Columbus Passes "Andre's Law"**

Andre Hill is the unarmed African-American man who was needlessly shot and killed by Columbus police officer Adam Coy on Dec. 22 while visiting a friend's house. Coy, who is White, not only failed to activate his body camera but he also did not provide any medical aid. The City of Columbus has now unanimously approved "Andre's Law." The ordinance states that officers must turn on their body cameras during all "enforcement actions" as soon as they leave their squad cars and approach individuals. That includes all police stops, pursuits, uses of force, arrests, forced entries, and any other adversarial encounters. Following use-of-force incidents, officers must also immediately administer first aid and summon EMS personnel (unless facing an imminent threat). Officers shall be trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the new ordinance states.

### **Edith Espinal Leaves Church Sanctuary**

After living inside Columbus Mennonite Church for over 3 years, Edith Espinal was finally able to go home to her husband and children. She had sought sanctuary in the church on Oct. 2, 2017 after Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) threatened to separate her from her family and deport her back to her native Mexico. Espinal has lived in Columbus for more than 20 years, is married, and has 3 children. In the eyes of ICE, however, she was an "illegal" immigrant and thus a "criminal" and an enforcement priority. During the Trump administration, every undocumented immigrant was a priority for deportation, regardless of history, families ties, work commitments, community connections, or the risk of injury or death in their home countries. Under the new Biden administration, ICE is once again focused on cases that present a threat to national security or public safety. Espinal is back to her family, but her struggle is not over. She is still under an order of deportation and under the supervision of ICE, with whom she must check in on a weekly basis. – As an aside note, Espinal's attorney, Lizbeth Mateo, noted that both Ohio Senators, Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman, "let her down" and did nothing to help her stay in the country. Presidential candidate Julian Castro was a noteworthy exception when he visited her in 2019. There are still dozens of people living in church sanctuaries across the nation. The Biden administration has been slow to help them, but persecuted minorities and immigrants feel more optimistic than before.

### **Health Officials Threatened**



Upper Arlington police are investigating after two shots were fired into the home of an official at the Ohio Dept. of Health on Jan. 23. It is not clear if Dr. Mary Kate Francis, assistant medical director of ODH, was the intended target and if this was an act of domestic terrorism. No one was injured. Dr. Francis was not at home at the time of the shooting. – Health officials live dangerously these days, both in Ohio and across the nation. Former director of the ODH, Dr. Amy Acton, resigned last June after she and her family became targets of anti-Semitic slurs, armed protests at her home in Bexley, and deaths threats. Her successor, Dr. Joan Duwve, withdrew her name from consideration after she learned about the relentless harassment Dr. Acton had faced. Other health officials were fired for political reasons or left their positions voluntarily.

### **Shenanigans at the Columbus Zoo**

The Columbus Dispatch reports improprieties at the Columbus Zoo & Aquarium, involving President and CEO Tom Stalf and Chief Financial Officer Greg Bell. They stand accused of nepotism after renting homes donated to the zoo to family members below market prices. They are also said to have used tickets to OSU games, the Columbus Blue Jackets, and concerts for themselves and their family members. Emails show that family members of the executives specifically requested tickets for plays, concerts, and sporting events. Zoo officials deny that improprieties occurred, but would not share lease agreements and other documentation. The zoo's board has launched an internal investigation into the alleged violations. The Ohio Ethics Commission is also considering whether to formally investigate the matter. However, in both cases the public is likely to remain in the dark for weeks and months. Under Ohio law, investigative information gathered by the Ohio Ethics Commission becomes a public record only if the commission reaches a settlement or refers the case for criminal prosecution. Ohio is rife with corruption from top to bottom. ECOT and HB 6 are only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Inspections and audits are often done perfunctorily. Our prediction is that within six months there will be a friendly separation of Stalf and Bell from the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, but no other consequences. However, voters will remember what happened and perhaps vote the next zoo levy down.

### **Drug-Overdose Deaths Up in Franklin County**

It comes as no surprise that drug-overdose deaths are up by about 45% in Franklin County during the first 9 months of 2020, according to figures released by Coroner Dr. Anahi Ortiz. 614 people died in Franklin Co. from an overdose through Sept. 30, 2020. In 2019, 597 people died from drug overdoses during the entire year. Of the 614 deaths, 531 or 86.5% involved fentanyl or a combination with fentanyl. Methamphetamine contributed to 97 deaths (15.8%). (Overlap explains the mathematical discrepancy.) More than 70% of the victims were male, and two-thirds were White. Statewide, the picture is similar. The Ohio Dept. of Health expects the number of overdose deaths in 2020 to surpass the all-time annual record of 4,854 set in 2017.

### **2021 COSI Science Festival Will Be Virtual Again**

COSI Columbus has decided to make its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Science Festival virtual again. It quickly became Ohio's largest event for the STEM sciences (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). Various cities (incl. Delaware), schools, museums, businesses, nonprofits, and so on are participating in the free programming. This year's dates are May 5-8. During the festival, COSI will also announce and honor the recipient of its inaugural John Glenn Inspiration Award to an outstanding individual.

### **2021 Arts Festival Canceled**

The 2021 Columbus Arts Festival, originally scheduled for June, has been canceled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. There are no plans for a virtual festival. The event will be back June 10-12, 2022, when it will move to a new location in the Arena district.

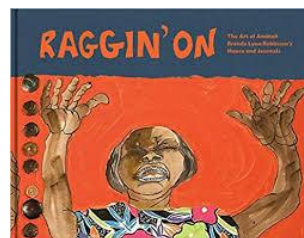
Several other festivals are also canceled in their entirety, among them the Jazz and Rib Fest. Some events will be held virtually, however. Among those is the Asian Festival (May 29-30), the ComFest (June 25-27), and the Pride Festival and March (date unconfirmed). The Red, White & Boom board of directors has yet to make a decision about the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks.

### **Pelotonia 2021**

Pelotonia will be back in person this year if things go according to plan. The organization has scheduled the 2021 ride for Aug. 6-8 after consulting with medical experts and health officials. The event typically draws 14,000 participants to downtown Columbus, along with volunteers, family members, and spectators. To avoid crowds, there will be more starting and finishing times and locations as well as additional routes. All snacks will be prepackaged. Organizers are also offering the virtual option on stationary bikes (called "Challenger option"). Registration begins Feb. 18. – In 2019, Pelotonia raised \$23 million for cancer research at OSU. (Last year's virtual event was down to \$10.5 million.)

### **Upcoming Columbus Symphony Concerts**

The Columbus Symphony will perform several in-person concerts at the Ohio Theatre this spring. Capacity and tickets are limited, however. March 19-20: Schubert's Welcome to Spring, April 16-17: Dvorak Serenades, April 30 / May 1: Waltzes & Royal Hunts, May 21-22: CSO Stars Explore Serenades, June 4-6: Mozart's "Jupiter." For details, visit [www.columbussymphony.com](http://www.columbussymphony.com). Tickets go on sale March 3.



### **Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson (1940-2015)**

The Columbus artist Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson has long been overlooked. It wasn't until a few days ago that the New York Times belatedly published her obituary. Robinson was born in Columbus, Ohio and lived there for her entire life, only interrupted by occasional study trips to Africa or the Gullah community off the coast of Georgia. It was her stated mission to tell the story of ordinary Black people, going all the way going back to Africa and slavery. She used all sorts of material to create her colorful work – from fabric and snakeskin to buttons and shells. Upon her death, she bequeathed her entire collection, library, and estate to the Columbus Museum of Art. In November, the museum opened "Raggin' On: The Art of Aminah Robinson's House and Journals." The special exhibition, the first major show since her death, runs through Oct. 3, 2021. More info can be found at [www.columbusmuseum.org](http://www.columbusmuseum.org).

### **Aldi Expands Its Chain**

Aldi currently operates 20 full-service stores in Central Ohio, but it is not yet done. At least two more stores are coming to Columbus. A store at 3280 Tremont Rd. in Upper Arlington's Kingsdale Center was recently approved. Aldi is also planning a new store on North High St. between Graceland Shopping Center and Worthington at 5455 N. High St., the property formerly owned by the American Heart Association. – Delaware's Aldi store is located at 973 Sunbury Rd. (US 36/37 East). Unlike other discount stores, Aldi offers a full spectrum of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products. During Covid-19, Aldi reserves the first business hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays to vulnerable shoppers. Masks are required.

### **"Columbus: Two Centuries of Business"**

A book on the history of Columbus may be of interest to some readers. Although it was published in 2016, it was only recently reviewed on H-Net. Written by Mansel G. Blackford, "Columbus, Ohio: Two Centuries of Business and Environmental Change" (OSU 2016, 256 pp.), analyzes the city's water and land-use policies from its founding in 1812 to the present. A couple of chapters focus on Columbus' water and sewage system. It was not until after the death from typhoid of Sen. Mark Hanna in 1904 that Columbus damned the Scioto River to create a reservoir for an improved water supply. It also built a state-of-the-art sewage system. The two chapters that discuss Columbus' land use, however, tell a less happy story. After WW I, public zoning codes and private deed covenants became the

preeminent means through which the growing city determined land use. Both, however, were often racially restrictive. To this day, Columbus struggles with school segregation, income inequality, racial profiling and discrimination, different health outcomes and life expectancies, and various other iterations of systemic racism. Along the way, the book also highlights various business and civic leaders whose names dot the urban landscape in the form of streets, parks, and neighborhoods. Among them are Samuel Prescott Buds, Lincoln Goodale, Murray Lincoln, William Neil, and Thomas Worthington.



## STATE OF OHIO

### **Gov. DeWine Lifts Overnight Curfew**

As Covid-19 numbers are beginning to look better in Ohio, Gov. Mike DeWine on Feb. 11 lifted the overnight curfew. The original curfew, from 10 pm to 5 am, was imposed Nov. 5. It was later reduced to 6 hours, from 11 pm to 5 am. All kinds of exceptions applied, from grocery shopping to emergencies, but it meant that restaurants and bars could not serve customers during curfew hours. The curfew, which other states also implemented, was designed to reduce late-night drinking and reveling. However, it is impossible to say how many infections, hospitalizations, and deaths were prevented when people stayed home. DeWine also announced that all Covid-19 restrictions would be lifted in Ohio if and when the number of new infections is below 50 per 100,000 people over a 2-week period. However, he also said that the curfew could be reimposed in the future if there is another spike of Covid-19 cases in the state, caused perhaps by new variants of the disease.

### **Ohio Undercounts Covid-19 Deaths by 4,000**

The Ohio Dept. of Health is responsible for counting deaths related to Covid-19. However, it turns out that up to 4,000 deaths were not counted in past tallies. After the figures were added, the state's total jumped from about 12,500 to 16,500, which is a significant undercount of about one third. It is not clear what caused the system failure. Was it incompetence? Was the methodology flawed? Or was there a political motive behind it? (The undercount is said to have started in October, before the Nov. 3 presidential elections.) Why was no one in charge of quality control? In any case, the numbers in public circulation are already confusing and questioned by many. For example, there are large discrepancies between the CDC figures and those of the ODH. The undercount erodes public trust and undermines credibility. – One ODH employee has resigned and another one was reassigned since the problem came to light. Ohio has since ended its own tallying and now relies solely on the numbers provided by the CDC. While those numbers may be more accurate, they are also severely delayed.

### **Senate Bill 22 Passes**

Republican lawmakers have been eager to restrict Governor DeWine's ability to issue public-health orders such as lockdowns, curfews, and mask mandates. Some have accused their fellow Republican of being a "dictator" and "tyrant." They believe he and the Ohio Dept. of Health have too much power and want to restore what they call "checks and balances." Hence Senate Bill 22, which passed on Feb. 17 by a vote of 25 to 8. It sets a 90-day expiration date on all public-health emergencies. It also gives the General Assembly the power to revoke a state of emergency after 30 days and a public-health directive after 10 days. Delaware Councilwoman Lisa Keller testified in favor of the bill, as reported by the Columbus Dispatch and WOSU. (It seems she may have an itch to play a more prominent role in the future.) DeWine has stated that he will veto the legislation as he has vetoed all previous attempts to curb the authority of the governor during a public-health crisis. However, Republicans now have a veto-proof majority in the Senate and will presumably override his veto.

### **Ohio's Next Biennial Budget**

Gov. Mike DeWine has started to release details about Ohio's next biennial budget (2021-23) that takes effect July 1. The proposed

general-revenue fund is \$75 billion over the next 2 years. Here are some preliminary highlights. Funding for K-12 schools will increase to a total of \$13.3 billion, but funding for higher education will remain stagnant. The amount of \$1 billion is devoted to investments in response to Covid-19. About \$450 million of that amount would be used to support small businesses, another \$450 million to support local communities. Of the latter amount, \$250 million is dedicated to the expansion of broadband internet service in underserved areas. Some funds (\$50 million) will be used in a national marketing campaign to promote Ohio as a great place to live, work, and attend school. The Ohio House and Senate will vet the proposals in the coming weeks and months. In addition, they will act on separate budgets for the Ohio Dept. of Transportation (ODOT) and the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation. – Watch for more details to emerge soon.

### **Ohio Finally Invests in Broadband Access**

In the past, Ohio has invested only paltry amounts in broadband accessibility. Vast rural areas and Appalachian counties are still without internet. About 1 million Ohioans still lack reliable, high-speed internet service. That is about to change, however. After the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 exposed Ohio's glaring digital divide, Gov. Mike DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted are recommending that the legislature spend a total of \$290 million toward broadband expansion in the next biennial budget. The Ohio Residential Broadband Grant Program envisions investing \$250 million in residential areas. Husted told reporters that people without internet connectivity "can't participate in the modern economy, the modern education system, the modern health-care system with it" and are thus held back. The initiative will bring Ohio closer to bridging the digital divide, but it would ultimately take \$2.3 billion to install broadband just across Appalachia Ohio, according to experts. The issue is a nationwide problem. According to Microsoft, as of 2019 more than 157 million people were not using the internet at broadband speeds.

### **A Body Camera for Every Police Officer**

Talking about the next biennial budget, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced on Feb. 3 that Ohio will support the acquisition of body-worn police cameras with \$10 million, incl. video storage and retrieval. Only 183 of nearly 900 police agencies in Ohio currently use body cameras. Dayton is the largest city without them. Cost has been an obstacle for many communities, but questions concerning technology, policy, and privacy have also slowed down the rollout. DeWine says his goal is "that every police officer in the State of Ohio has a body camera."

### **Ohio Prisons Still Crowded**

Before Covid-19 hit the Buckeye State, the Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) housed about 48,080 inmates, putting the system at 133% of capacity. Today, the figure is about 43,472 or 118% of capacity, according to agency chief Annette Chambers-Smith. There are 5,608 fewer people in the system than one year ago. However, the decrease of 11.4% is not exactly a "dramatic drop." Considering that thousands of inmates (and many prison guards) were infected and hundreds died in overcrowded facilities, it is shocking and disappointing to see how few people were released from incarceration or put on probation despite many years of talk about "prison reform." It is also important to note Blacks and other BIPOC people are disproportionately represented – and mistreated – in Ohio's prison system, which suggests the presence of systemic racism. The focus should be on keeping people *out of prison* instead of putting and keeping them in prison. However, it is clear that Ohio's Republican establishment and ODRC are less focused on social "rehabilitation" and reintegration and more on harsh retribution and punishment. ODRC has a budget of \$4.1 billion. Much of that money could have been spent on more productive things such as Covid-19 help, eviction assistance, improving infrastructure, fighting poverty in Appalachia, eliminating homelessness, broadband access, school lunches, and so on. It was reported a few years ago that Ohio's colleges and universities receive less state money than prisons. The continued tough-on-crime ideology and cancer of mass incarceration is detrimental to society as a whole and does nothing to elevate Ohio's status.

### **Update on HB 6**

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost and FirstEnergy Corp. have reached an agreement that stops the collection of monthly fees from customers to bail out two nuclear power plants in northern Ohio. The company would have collected up to \$102 million this year and about \$2 billion in the long run. A closer look suggests that the agreement, while a bonus for utility customers, is a dirty quid pro quo. In turn, state officials consented not to block other portions of HB 6 from taking effect. HB 6 is the result of the biggest corruption scandal in the history of Ohio, but Republican lawmakers see no reason to repeal the law in its entirety.

### **Rob Portman Announces Retirement**

In an announcement that surprised many, Rob Portman, the 65-year-old Ohio Republican senator from Cincinnati, said Jan. 25 that he is not seeking reelection 2022. He said he was proud of his centrist, bipartisan record, but that the country has become too "polarized" to continue. In 2022, Republicans have to defend at least 20 Senate seats compared to only 14 for Democrats. Ohioans can expect names like Jim Jordan and Josh Mandel to be floated. Jim Renacci, Steve Stivers, and J. D. Vance, the author of "Hillbilly Elegy," are also possible contenders. Jane Timken just stepped down from her job as chairperson of the Ohio Republican Party, so she is considering a run as well. On the Democratic side, Nan Whaley and Tim Ryan are obvious choices. David Pepper might be interested in the position, and Amy Acton is mulling over a run. Portman's departure makes the race a competitive one, especially if the Republican candidate is a far-right individual. Update: Several Republicans have indicated that they are not interested in running for Portman's seat, among them Jon Husted, Jim Jordan, John Kasich, and Pat Tiberi.

### **Jane Timken Resigns as Ohio GOP Chairperson**

Ohio Republican Party Chairwoman Jane Timken, 54, has resigned from her position after being reelected for another 2-year-term in January. It is the clearest sign yet that she is ready to run for Rob Portman's job in the U.S. Senate. Timken, a Cincinnati native and trained lawyer, is married to former CEO of TimkenSteel, Ward J. ("Tim") Timken, connected to the rich and powerful, and an adept fundraiser. However, she has never held an elected public-office position and has largely been a force behind the scenes. A run for the Senate would challenge her in many ways. Timken has been a loyal advocate for Trump and has criticized efforts to impeach him. Trump is still "the leader of our party," she says, and she will continue to fight for him and his America First agenda. Trump is still a force to be reckoned with, but that may change over time. The landscape may be different in the second half of 2021, and Timken's erstwhile fealty to Trump may come back to haunt her.

### **Ohio Republican Party Has New Chair**

Bob Paduchik is the new chairman of the Ohio Republican Party, as expected. He replaces Jane Timken who resigned to run for the U.S. Senate. Paduchik prevailed over former Rep. John Becker, one of the lawmakers who tried to impeach Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine over his Covid-19 response. The rivalry between Paduchik and Becker reflects the national fracture within the GOP, which is currently badly split between the populists and the establishment. Robert A. Paduchik has a decades-long history of being a GOP operative. He helped George Voinovich, George W. Bush, Bob Taft, Rob Portman, Donald Trump, and Jane Timken. It may be a less known fact that his brother, Jason Paduchik, is a lobbyist for Energy Harbor (formerly First Energy). Both Paduchiks did what they could to get HB 6 passed in 2020. The nuclear-bailout bill and the corruption that surrounded it is now at the heart of a federal investigation. Bob Paduchik has also served as a propagandist for "clean coal" (an oxymoron) and, according to Wikipedia, "was a driving force in the so-called Yucca Mountain Project," now abandoned. He resides in Genoa Township in Delaware County.

### **Josh Mandel Joins Senate Race**

Josh Mandel has announced that he will run for the seat vacated by Sen. Rob Portman. This will be his 3<sup>rd</sup> run. Mandel, a conservative Republican, served as state treasurer and was the first statewide official in Ohio to back Donald Trump in 2016. He continues to support the former president and believes that impeachment efforts against him are "a complete sham." He plans "to pulverize" the

establishment when he goes to Washington. It is probable that Mandel will face competition in the GOP primary from Jane Timken, the former head of the Ohio Republican Party, a wealthy Trump associate, and more of an establishment Republican. Despite his young age (he is 43), Mandel has an interesting past and an extensive track record that is not always to his credit. There have been stories about self-promotion, support for alt-right hatemongers and conspiracy theorists (despite the fact that he is Jewish), dark money, unlawful campaign contributions (the Benjamin Suarez story), the illegal use of an SUV, and more. In addition, it might be helpful to recall a couple of articles he published in the "Delaware Gazette" in 2014. He stated back then that there are too many students with useless college degrees who end up serving coffee at Starbucks. Instead, he said, we should bring back "shop class" to train more "welders, pipe-fitters, electricians, carpenters, machinists, and other skilled trades." Mandel is a conservative who questions the value of colleges and universities. He and his ilk have no interest in higher education. They prefer people without college degrees and critical-thinking skills whom they can manipulate and who will vote for Trump or whoever the next strongman is. The fact is that in today's economy a college degree is an indispensable requirement for most well-paid positions. It may also be noteworthy to know that in 2019 Mandel wiped clean his Facebook and Twitter accounts and deleted posts considered by many as offensive. There is a lot the man is hiding, making it hard to trust him.

### **Who Will Run for Ohio Governor in 2022?**

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine is not in an enviable position. In trying to follow a middle path, he has alienated both conservative Republicans and progressive Democrats. He has embraced pro-gun and anti-abortion ideologies, but he has also locked Ohio down during the Covid-19 pandemic and imposed curfews. There is no question that he will be heavily "primaried" from the right, as threatened by former Pres. Trump, and also be challenged by Democrats. Potential challengers from the right include Jim Renacci of Wadsworth, a multi-millionaire. On the Democratic side, Cincinnati Mayor John J. Cranley has emerged as a frontrunner. The 46-year-old Democrat started a fundraising committee as early as last February and has amassed some \$500,000. He is also assisted by a political action committee, Cincinnati PAC. Cranley has degrees from Harvard Law School and Harvard Divinity School and has worked as an attorney. He has been involved in Cincinnati politics for 20 years, but has so far had little experience on the state level. He has been mayor of the city since 2013, but is term-limited. Speaking against him is the fact that there is a culture of corruption in Cincinnati City Hall. Last year, several individuals were accused of accepting bribes for votes. A positive fact is that Cranley is the co-founder of the Ohio Innocence Project at the Univ. of Cincinnati College of Law, which has helped exonerate 28 wrongfully convicted individuals.

### **Marcia L. Fudge Confirmed as HUD Secretary**

Rep. Marcia L. Fudge, Democrat of Ohio, has been picked by Pres. Joe Biden to serve as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and has since been confirmed by the Senate by a vote of 66 to 34. Fudge, 68, is the former chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, now led by Joyce Beatty of Ohio. Fudge has been a member of the House since 2008 when she won a special election. The attorney represented Ohio's 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in the northeast and is a former mayor of Warrensville Heights (2000-2008), a Cleveland suburb. She joins HUD at a time when affordable housing is in short supply across the nation and many Americans face the risk of being evicted. During her confirmation hearings, she expressed her desire to make homeownership "a reality for all Americans." Her immediate priority is to prevent evictions caused by the loss of income during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ohio Senator Rob Portman said of Fudge, "She will make Ohio proud."

### **Liquor Sales Reach Record High**

The Ohio Division of Liquor Control says the sale of liquor has jumped to \$1.57 billion in 2020, an increase of \$247 million or 19% from the previous year. The amount of liquor sold was 16.7 million gallons, up 10%. By definition, the term "liquor" excludes beer and other fermented beverages. Analysts believe that the lockdowns related to Covid-19 is partially responsible for the increase. People were stressed and stuck at home for much of 2020. Sales could go



even higher in 2021. Ohio now permits the sale of alcoholic beverages with carryout-food orders and allows the home delivery of liquor. While most people drink responsibly, the pandemic has led to a rise in substance-abuse issues.

### **Fracking in Ohio Did Not Result in Economic Boom**

Hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") in Ohio's Marcellus and Utica regions was once touted as an economic savior for counties in economic distress. However, a new report released by the Ohio River Valley Institute, an independent think tank, found that the counties responsible for oil-and-gas production saw a decline in population, jobs, and personal income. Seven eastern Ohio counties (Belmont, Carroll, Guernsey, Harrison, Jefferson, Monroe, and Noble) were among the hardest hit compared to other counties in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. In other words, fracking has done little to revive Appalachia. Some money did pour in, but it did not stay locally as many landowning beneficiaries reside out of state.

### **Huntington Bank Merges with TCF**

Columbus-based Huntington National Bank continues to expand. It has now announced a merger with Detroit-based TCF National Bank. The combined company will have about \$168 billion in assets, \$177 billion in loans, and \$134 billion in deposits. The TCF name will disappear in the \$22 billion merger. Countless TCF locations will be closed and/or consolidated, especially in Michigan. Three TCF locations in Warren and Youngstown, Ohio will also be closed. Nine TCF locations in Ohio (Austintown, Cortland, Elyria, Grafton, Niles, North Ridgeville, Ravenna, Solon, and Youngstown) will be consolidated. It is unknown how many jobs will be affected by the merger.

### **"Toni Morrison Day" on February 18**

Nobel Prize laureate Toni Morrison (1931-2019) was born and raised as Chloe A. Wofford in Lorain, Ohio. The community is located on Lake Erie, just west of Cleveland. She graduated from Lorain High School in 1949 before moving on to Howard Univ. and Cornell Univ. Between 1970 and 2015 she published 11 novels: *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby*, *Beloved*, *Jazz*, *Paradise*, *Love*, *A Mercy*, *Home*, and *God Help the Child*. She won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993 and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama in 2012. Morrison may be Ohio's most important writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but works such as "*Beloved*," "*The Bluest Eye*," and "*Song of Solomon*" are frequently challenged by conservatives. For example, in 2013 Ohio School Board President Debe Terhar called for the exclusion of "*The Bluest Eye*" from a suggested reading list for Ohio's high-school students. In the novel, the heroine is raped and impregnated by her own father. The Ohio Senate unanimously passed House Bill 325 to designate Feb. 18 as "Toni Morrison Day, and the bill was promptly signed by Gov. DeWine. – Update: While Black History Month was celebrated widely, Feb. 18 came and went with zero recognition for Toni Morrison in local and regional newspapers or radio and television stations. We did not hear as much as a peep. – "*Sula*" is said to be Toni Morrison's most autobiographical novel. It takes place in fictitious Medallion, a highly segregated "little river town in Ohio." It is an interesting novel, but if you are looking for concrete factual information about the author you will be disappointed.

### **2021 Ohioana Book Festival**

The 2021 Ohioana Book Festival will be held virtually from Fri., April 23 through Sun., April 25. It is Ohio's most important book fair and an indispensable event for teachers, librarians, and anyone interested in Ohio's literary heritage. To learn more, visit [www.ohioana.org](http://www.ohioana.org).

### **"President Trump Day" on June 14?**

The 45<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. was born on June 14, 1946. A cabal of Republican lawmakers believe he was "one of the greatest presidents in American history" and wish to make June 14<sup>th</sup> President Donald J. Trump Day. The two instigators behind the effort are Reps. Jon Cross (Kenton) and Reggie Stoltzfus (Paris Township). However, June 14<sup>th</sup> is also Flag Day, which complicates the situation. Also, the honor is usually reserved for dead presidents. Lastly, aren't there more important problems in Ohio at the moment? Maybe Cross and

Stoltzfus have not yet heard that the state is struggling with Covid-19 and a difficult economic situation. This is empty, meaningless grandstanding that does nothing to improve the situation of ordinary people.

### **"Hustler" Founder Larry Flynt Dies**

Larry Flynt (1942-2021) has died of heart failure at the age of 78. Born in the heart of Appalachia (Lakeville, Kentucky), he grew up in a poor and broken "hillbilly" family. His parents split up. After serving in the Navy, Flynt moved to Dayton, Ohio with his mother. There he found his "calling" in the late 1960s and launched his career. He opened his first strip club, which soon expanded to Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Toledo. In 1974, he started "*Hustler*," a sexually explicit magazine that shocked many. (Or at least they pretended to be shocked. Flynt's response was that gory battles scenes from Vietnam were much more "obscene.") He used high-profile litigation, notoriety, and publicity to his advantage. He moved to Los Angeles and founded many other magazines, not all of which were pornographic in nature. He continued to be a controversial and flamboyant figure. In 1978, White supremacist Joseph Paul Franklin shot him and his lawyer, leaving Flynt paralyzed from the waist down. – It's hard to tell how history will remember "the prince of porn" and "the king of smut." Was he a staunch free-speech advocate and activist? Or was he a sleazy villain who unscrupulously exploited women?

## **THE NATION**

### **Congress Passes \$1.9 Trillion Relief Bill**

Covid-19 has infected close to 30 million Americans, killed over half a million, and devastated the economy. On March 12, Congress approved President Biden's historic \$1.9 trillion relief and stimulus bill that addresses the "twindemic." The vote was 220 to 211. Rep. Jared Golden of Maine was the only Democrat who opposed the measure. Not a single Republican voted for the rescue plan. Most notably, the legislation includes a \$1,400 direct payment to most adults who earn up to \$75,000 annually. It also extends the \$300 weekly unemployment benefit to September. In addition, the measure allocates money to a myriad of areas impacted by Covid-19. \$350 billion will go to state and local governments, \$160 billion to vaccine development and distribution, \$130 billion to schools and colleges, \$50 billion to small businesses, \$30 billion to renters and landlords, and so on. To the chagrin of conservatives, even libraries & museums and the arts & humanities received a modest amount of money because they, too, were victims of the pandemic. Republicans such as House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy criticized the bill as a bloated laundry list of left-wing priorities, but the reality is that the anti-poverty legislation will help everyone and revitalize the economy. States such as Ohio and local governments such as the City of Delaware will be among the beneficiaries. Polls have shown robust support (70%) for the way Biden is handling the coronavirus. – Progressives were not happy with certain aspects of the relief bill either, but to maintain unity they acquiesced to changes. For example, a provision to increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour was dropped. Unemployment benefits were reduced from \$400 per week to \$300 per week. That mollified moderate Democrats, but it did not persuade a single Republican to support the relief package. Voters will hopefully remember in 2024 and beyond who was on their side during the pandemic and who wasn't.

### **Was Trump a "Führer"?**

ABC correspondent Terry Moran has recently compared former Pres. Trump's personal control over the Republican Party to that of a caudillo, Caesar, or Führer. Needless to say, he was harshly criticized by the likes of Sen. Josh Hawley of Louisiana. Nobody can deny that Trump's presidency represented a cult of personality, and sycophants were busy to accommodate his every whimsical grievance and wish. But does it go too far to compare him to Hitler, the "Führer" par excellence?

Let's look at how Adolf Hitler defined the term in his "*Mein Kampf*." Hitler despised parliamentary democracy. Instead, he believed that a strong, supreme "Führer" is needed whose leads the passive masses and whose decisions are final. (The German word "führen" means "to lead.") The political party (the NSDAP) and the state Hitler envisioned (the Third Reich) are based on the hierarchic "Führer

principle" (Führerprinzip"), i.e., the principle of "the unconditional authority of the leader" ("die unbedingte Führerautorität"). Just like the Aryan master caste or race is supposedly superior to other castes and races, the Führer is superior to ordinary people. Parliamentary and constitutional considerations traditions and rules do not apply to his genius. Such a leader stands effectively above the law and is accountable only to God. Yes, a Führer may benefit from political entities that advise him, but these bodies are allowed to make recommendations only. Once Hitler came to power in 1933, he immediately began to implement his theories. One year later, he had consolidated the offices of the German chancellor and the president into a single position that gave him the absolute authority that he always craved.

Trump, too, consistently flouted norms and publicly mused about being "president for life" like Putin or Xi. Trump, too, took over control of everything. Hitler was a sociopath; Trump's narcissism and megalomania are well-known. Hitler inflicted a lot of damage on his nation and the entire world; the same can be said about Trump. Both used hateful language that divided and ruined the country instead of uniting it. Hitler loathed the Jews as the root of all evil; Trump had a strong animus against anyone who was not a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) and did his best to exclude them. Neither man had any interest in human rights and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Both were fond of militaristic pageantry and martial law. They also shared a corrupt proclivity to reward cronies, loyalists, and allies. There are many more parallels.

Trump was not Hitler for several reasons. Hitler, who ruled from 1933 to 1945, had more time at his disposal. He also had a fixed ideology and political program whereas Trump and associates often groped in the dark and stumbled. Also, the democratic institutions and traditions in the U.S. (what Trump called "the deep state") were older and more robust than those in Weimar Germany. However, it is fair to state that Trump was an illiberal strongman in the tradition of Mussolini and Hitler who consistently used demagogic rhetoric, fear and threats, lies and propaganda, and the demonization of others to consolidate power in a way that is antithetical to democracy. Historians may one day compare Mussolini's March on Rome and Hitler's Munich putsch to the Jan. 6, 2021 intrusion and insurrection at the U.S. Capitol that Trump incited. We now know it was not a spontaneous event; it was planned and orchestrated by far-right groups such as the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers weeks and months ahead of time. They all say, in their defense, that the commander in chief had summoned them there. Many books have already been published about Trump and Trumpism, with countless more to follow. Most authors of such studies seem to agree with ABC correspondent Terry Moran's assessment.

### **Trump's Covid-19 Sickness Was Severe**

After former Pres. Trump contracted Covid-19 in late September 2020, he was much sicker than publicly acknowledged at the time. He had a lung problem associated with Covid-induced pneumonia, a high fever, and extremely low blood-oxygen levels that dipped into the 80s. At age 74 and overweight, he was greatly at risk. It was feared he needed to be put on a ventilator and was repeatedly given oxygen. He was taken to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Oct. 2 where he stayed for 3 days. Throughout the ordeal, Trump and his medical team downplayed the severity of the situation. However, the perception that the true extent of Trump's sickness was being deliberately concealed was widespread, both nationally and internationally.

### **CDC Orders Masks on Public Transportation**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued an order requiring travelers to wear masks on public transportation in the U.S. It took effect Feb. 1. Passengers on airplanes, trains, buses, subways, ships, ferries, taxis, and ride-shares must wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose during the ride. People are also asked to wear facial coverings on the premises of transportation hubs such as airports, train & subway stations, bus & ferry stations, seaports & ports of entry. In addition, Pres. Biden has also issued an executive order that mandates masks in all federal buildings and on federal property.

### **Antony Blinken Is the New Secretary of State**

President-elect Joe Biden has picked Antony Blinken, 58, as his Secretary of State. He was the former Deputy Secretary in the Obama administration under John Kerry. His selection (and Senate confirmation) is a reassuring sign that the foreign policy is back on track. A strong internationalist, Blinken is expected to repair the frayed relationships with U.S. allies that the Trump administration abandoned. He is also a longtime Senate colleague, friend, and confidant of Biden.

### **General Lloyd J. Austin to Lead the Pentagon**

There is no question that retired General Lloyd J. Austin III, a 4-star Army general, is a uniquely qualified and widely respected military leader. His nomination is historic. However, there are at least two reasons why he is the wrong man to lead the Pentagon. First, current rules require a waiting period of 7 years after ending active duty before becoming Secretary of Defense. (Originally, the waiting period was 10 years, but Congress changed this in 2008.) General Austin retired only 4 years ago, in 2016. It is a cornerstone principle in American politics that the military be led by civilian leadership. Recently retired officers would be too cozy with their friends and colleagues still on active duty. That is the way authoritarian regimes work. It is true that James N. Mattis was granted a waiver by Congress under President Trump, but many lawmakers felt extremely uneasy about this and only granted consent because they felt Mattis would keep the erratic president in check. Only 36 House Democrats approved the emergency measure.

Second, General Austin has been serving on the board of Raytheon Technologies, the manufacturer of missiles, fighter-jet engines, radar systems, high-tech sensors, and dozens of other military products it sells all over the world. Much of the hardware has been used in wars and against civilians, e.g., in Yemen. Austin is on the board of other military contractors and weapons dealers that develop rocket-launching systems and machine guns. He is also a board member of steel company Nucor, the largest steel and steel-product producer in the U.S. and a subcontractor to at least 2 major defense contractors (Oshkosh Defense and Huntington Ingalls). According to the New York Times, he owns stock and has received payments in the amount of millions. In the view of most people, America's national security should not be determined by the greedy behemoths of the military-industrial complex, incl. Raytheon, Boeing, and General Dynamics.

Does Joe Biden not know about General Austin's background? Of course he does. His positive assessment of Austin has not wavered. That raises a slew of questions about Biden and the legions of people who surround him. Many have ties to the former Obama administration, but many of his top choices also have ties to various industries. It is clear that their selection is intentional. Biden, who is not a progressive, *wants* his associates to have close connections with agriculture, manufacturing, technology, the defense industry, and so on. Arms exports to Saudi Arabia and other dictatorships will continue. Biden is signaling to the business world that, contrary to Republican fearmongering, the industry has little to fear from his administration. He will have their back. This ensures not only their political support but also future financial contributions. Progressives have every reason to be leery and wary of establishmentarian Democrats.

### **American Infrastructure Gets Grade of "C-"**

The American Society of Civil Engineers has given the infrastructure of the U.S. an overall grade of "C-" for its aging and crumbling bridges and tunnels, train stations and airports, water and sewer systems, gas lines and levees, energy grid and public transportation. Of assessments in 17 categories, 11 resulted in a failing grade in the "D" range. They included public transit, storm water, airports, highways & roads. Four areas got "Cs": bridges, energy, drinking water, and solid waste. Just 2 areas scored in the "B" range – ports and rail. The report noted that America's infrastructure is in disrepair and often not functioning as it should. Congestion, delays, closings, breakdowns, outages, unsafe conditions, injuries and deaths are the inevitable result of decades of neglect and underinvestment. The infrastructure is also increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters and deliberate attacks. The Civil Engineers estimate it would cost \$5.9 trillion over the next decade to address the situation. The Trump administration was never serious about

improving America's infrastructure. The Biden administration, on the other hand, is putting renewed emphasis on the problem. It is aware that global competitors are pulling ahead while America lags behind. Modernizing the failing infrastructure would also lead to millions of new jobs.

#### **Pete Buttigieg Is the New Transportation Secretary**

Joe Biden's choice for Transportation Secretary is Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana and once a presidential candidate himself. He is considered a rising star within the Democratic Party. Buttigieg is the first openly gay cabinet member ever. The 38-year-old millennial married his husband, Chasten, in 2018. The Transportation Secretary has the authority to regulate vehicle emissions, the leading source of greenhouse-gas emissions in the U.S. – President Trump never lived up to his promise to make America's crumbling infrastructure great again. It remains to be seen if the Biden administration will do better in terms of roads and bridges, mass transit and electric vehicles.

#### **Miguel Cardona Confirmed as Education Secretary**

Dr. Miguel A. Cardona has been nominated by President-elect Joe Biden to be the next Secretary of the Dept. of Education. He has served as Connecticut's education chief for 16 months after working as a public-school teacher and principal for 2 decades in Meriden, Conn. Cardona has argued that little evidence exists of Covid-19 transmission within schools and has encouraged districts in his state to remain open. He has stressed the educational, social, and psychological benefits of in-person classes over virtual learning. Cardona is expected to lead Biden's push to reopen all public schools in the first 100 days of the new administration, provided conditions are right. The bilingual Cardona, 45, adds another Latino to Biden's cabinet. His parents are from Puerto Rico and he grew up in public housing. He has worked in the public school system his entire career. Teachers unions such as the AFT and the NEA welcomed his nomination. Bloomberg Opinion pointed out his ability to balance competing interests and called him "a sound choice" and "a solid selection."

#### **Does Marjorie Taylor Greene Belong in Congress?**

Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene is new in Congress, but she has already alienated a lot of people. A staunch supporter of former Pres. Trump, she is an open believer in QAnon and other conspiracy fantasies. She has described mass shootings at schools as staged events. She has called for the execution of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Nancy Pelosi. She has questioned the results of the 2020 presidential elections and filed articles of impeachment against Pres. Joe Biden on the day after his inauguration. Needless to say, she also opposes face coverings during the Covid-19 pandemic. Democrats want Greene, 46, stripped of committee assignments and expelled from Congress altogether. Even Senate Minority leader Mitch McConnell, who is done with Trump, now says Greene's "loony lies" and conspiracy theories are "a cancer for the Republican Party." The problem is that she enjoys strong support from many Trump voters. The Republican Party is badly split between those who have accepted the reality that Biden is the legitimate 46<sup>th</sup> president and those who continue to deny it. Greene has become the face of sedition and insurgency, but she is also paying a heavy price for it as she may be censored, blackballed, and perhaps even expelled. It is not clear at this point what the GOP's future will be. Will one side win over the other or will the party split up into Trumpers and non-Trumpers? Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to create his "Patriot Party," but so far the Republican base stands solidly behind him.

#### **Rep. Ron Wright of Texas Dies of Covid-19**

Rep. Ron Wright, R-Texas, became the first sitting member of Congress to die from Covid-19. He tested positive on Jan. 21 and passed away on Feb. 7, at the age of 67. He has experienced complications from treatment for lung cancer in the past, so underlying medical conditions were a factor. He is believed to have contracted the virus in Washington while attending a swearing-in ceremony. Wright represented Texas' 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. – In December, incoming Louisiana

representative Luke Letlow, 41, died of complications related to Covid-19 just days before he would have been sworn into office.

#### **New Guidelines for ICE**

Many people have called for the abolishment of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Under Pres. Trump, ICE was given wide latitude to arrest and deport undocumented immigrants by the thousands, rip families apart, and keep kids in cages. Some observers have called these inhumane practices domestic terrorism. Non-White immigrants were indeed harassed and persecuted whenever and wherever they were found. ICE gruesome abuses were deliberate and designed to instill fear and make immigration to the U.S. as unpalatable as possible. Unfortunately, Pres. Biden has no intention to abolish ICE and start anew. However, he is putting new rules in place that are expected to result in fewer arrests and deportations. Agents are being asked to focus on serious felonious crimes and national security threats, not stopping, arresting, and deporting undocumented immigrants for petty things like jaywalking or traffic misdemeanors. Critics of Biden's new stance argue that the new directives would take away agents' discretion to arrest and deport "dangerous criminals." That is certainly not the case. ICE is simply asked to play its proper role in law enforcement instead of committing human-rights violations that have severely tarnished the country's reputation.

#### **Firefighters Exposed to PFAS in Their Gear**

The International Association of Fire Fighters, the nation's largest firefighters union, is demanding independent tests of PFAS in their gear as cancer has emerged as a leading cause of death for firefighters. They are at risk for testicular cancer, mesothelioma, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. OSHA studies have confirmed that their risk of getting cancer and dying from it is significantly higher than in the general population. Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as "forever chemicals," can be found in a wide variety of products, including food packaging. The Biden administration has said it would make PFAS more of a priority and designate them as "hazardous" substances. The manufacturers of the firefighting equipment (3M, Chemours, Du Pont, and others) have denied responsibility and expressed disappointment that the 300,000 union members might vote against future sponsorships in the coming days.

#### **Chamber of Commerce Appoints Female Leader**

For the first time in its history, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has a chief executive who is female. Suzanne Clark will assume her new position effective March 11, replacing Thomas J. Donohue. Under Donohue's 24-year tenure, the Chamber was a staunch backer of Republican values and politicians, but during the erratic and unpredictable presidency of Donald Trump those ties frayed and the Chamber started to encourage more bipartisanship. Clark is expected to continue this trend, especially now that the Biden administration is in charge in Washington.

#### **Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos Steps Aside**

Amazon announced that founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, 57, will step down this summer and hand over the day-to-day responsibilities to Andy Jassy. Bezos himself will become executive chairman and focus on new initiatives and products. The announcement came as a surprise. Amazon has done well financially in 2020, but like the other tech giants (Apple, Facebook, and Google) it is under great political pressure in Europe and the U.S. Bezos, one of the world's richest men, also owns the "Washington Post," which he bought for \$250 million in 2013.

#### **Theft of Catalytic Converters Skyrocket**

In parts of the country, the theft of catalytic converters has spiked dramatically. Columbus police also say they have seen a surge in catalytic-converter thefts this year. Catalytic converters are coated with precious metals such as palladium, platinum, and rhodium. Both palladium and rhodium are currently more valuable than gold, making catalytic converters an attractive target for criminals. An experienced thief can crawl under a vehicle and saw them off within minutes. In Ohio, only one catalytic converter per person per day can be sold to a scrap-metal dealer. Some states require scrapyard dealers to check photo IDs before buying used catalytic converters, but tracking and



enforcement is difficult given the fact that each state has its own rules and regulations. In addition, there are scrapyards that happily accept the devices via mail and are prepared to pay quick cash – in some cases, hundreds of dollars. What can car owners do? Parking vehicles in secure garages, fenced enclosures, and/or well-lit areas helps. Some car lots have resorted to desperate measures such as letting the air out of the tires (to prevent thieves from crawling under the vehicle) or installing metal guards for their catalytic converters. Replacing a catalytic converters can set owners back up to \$2,000 in repairs, so it makes sense to consider precautions. Replacement of the part may be covered by your insurance company, but coverage is optional and deductibles apply.

### **President Biden Promises to Close Gitmo**

Pres. Obama had 8 years to close the Guantanamo prison facility. Pres. Trump did not seem to care one way or the other, but he too remained passive. The ball is now in Pres. Biden's court. It is the stated "intention" of the Biden administration to close the detention center on the island of Cuba, but the White House has so far provided no time line. It must be remembered that it was also Obama's pledge to do so, but he never did. A few things have changed, however, which may actually make it possible for the new president to act on his word. First of all, Guantánamo Bay is no longer the powerful and untouchable symbol it once was in the global war against "Islamic terrorism." In the U.S., it is now domestic, right-wing insurrectionism and terrorism that is the more much deadly danger. In addition, there are only 40 "enemy combatants" left compared to the nearly 700 at the peak in 2003. Many prisoners are aged, frail, and/or cleared for release. Furthermore, during the last two decades Guantánamo has become the target of international criticism over the inhumane treatment of inmates and their yearslong imprisonment under dubious circumstances and without charge. Many prisoners had no idea why they were there in the first place. Lastly, running the facility is tough on the budget. The annual operating costs in 2016 was \$445 million. The majority of Americans would presumably not stand in the way if Biden chose to shut Guantánamo down for good. However, there is still some vocal opposition. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, has stated that "Republicans will fight tooth and nail" to keep the concentration camp open. He calls it dangerous and misguided to release "terrorists" and unleash them on the American people.

### **Ted Cruz under Criticism for Abandoning Texas**

As Texas was devastated by a brutal winter storm that left millions in the cold and dark, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) traveled to the sunny resort town of Cancún in Mexico for a family vacation. He was scheduled to stay for an extended period of time, but criticism forced him to return to Texas the next day. Last summer, Cruz lambasted California for being "unable to perform even basic functions of civilization" when wildfires broke out. Ironically, it is now Texas where civilization has collapsed and people are without electricity, heat, and drinking water in freezing temperatures. At least 30 deaths have been reported. Democrats called on Cruz to resign, but that is unlikely to happen. However, the incident could hurt Cruz' chances of running for president in 2024. Clearly, he is out of touch with ordinary people.

### **A Correlation between Agent Orange and Dementia**

A study just published in JAMA Neurology compared 316,351 Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange (dioxin) with those who were not exposed to the herbicide. It found that those exposed to the Agent Orange were twice as likely to develop dementia in later years. Exposure to the defoliant has long been associated with Parkinson's disease, some cancers (incl. brain cancer), and other diseases and conditions. However, the Dept. of Veterans Affairs does not recognize dementia or brain cancer as diseases associated with Agent Orange. Veterans suffering from dementia (or glioblastoma) are therefore not eligible for V.A. benefits. Veterans of foreign wars & their families continue to be underserved.

### **"White Human Beings" Only**

Louisiana Police officer Darrell Semien served honorably in the Allen Parish sheriff's dept. for 15 years before he died, at age 55, of cancer on Jan. 24. When his widow Karla Semien called the small, 2-acre Oaklin Spring Cemetery at 124 Musselwhite Rd. in Oberlin, Louisiana to make arrangements for his funeral, she was told by an

employee of the cemetery that only "white human beings" had the right of burial at the graveyard, according to the written contract she was shown. After the incident became known, the Oaklin Springs Cemetery board met in an emergency session on Jan. 28 to remove the word "white" from the bylaws. Board president H. Creig Vizona pleaded ignorance and told media that none of the board members had been aware of the provision included in the by-laws and contract. He said he was "sorry." He advised other southern cemeteries to check their charters, bylaws, and contracts to see if they too had similar racist regulations, leftovers from the bygone Jim Crow era. – The Louisiana incident may or may not have been a deliberate act of discrimination, but the fact is that even today there are countless covenants, deeds, and other legal documents that contain racist language. Many expressly forbid the sale of land or a building to non-Whites. Despite their patent immorality and illegality, they cannot be altered because they are "legal" documents. Obviously, there is something very wrong here.

### **Indianapolis Museum of Art Promotes "White Art"**

The Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields is currently looking for a new director. The job description noted that the future director would be expected to maintain the museum's "traditional, core, white art audience." The decision to use the word "white" was deliberate and intended to make clear that the museum would not abandon its existing base of White donors and art lovers and continue to cater to them. After criticism, the Museum eventually revised the job description, which eliminated the word "white" and now reads "traditional core art audience." However, by that time two guest curators for an upcoming Black Lives Matter street mural exhibition decided they could not continue given the context. This is not the first time the Indianapolis Museum of Art was involved in controversy. Kelli Morgan, recruited in 2018 to diversify the museum's galleries, resigned in July 2020, calling the institution's culture "toxic," discriminatory," and "racist." In 2015, the museum started to charge an \$18 admission fee at the formerly free institution, making it difficult for BIPOC people with lesser means to visit the collections. Today, it charges \$25 for adults and \$17 for youth (ages 6-17), which ensures that the 152-acre campus remains a (segre-) gated oasis for the privileged.

Update: Following the national firestorm, the president of Newfields, Charles L. Venable, has resigned from his position. The museum's board of trustees and board of governors (overwhelmingly white) issued a statement that read, in part: "We have ignored, excluded, and disappointed members of our community and staff. We pledge to do better" to regain the community's trust and respect. Newfields will conduct an independent review of the museum's culture, leadership, and boards. It will also add free or reduced-fee days to make the museum more accessible to everyone. An action plan, with specific deadlines, will follow within the next 30 days.

### **"1619 Project" under Attack by Conservatives**

The year 1619 marks the arrival of the first known enslaved Africans in the British colonies that later became the United States. To commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the New York Times Magazine in 2019 published the "1619 Project," which highlighted the dark and ugly legacy of racism, slavery, and genocide in American history. It included essays, poems, audio, visual art, lesson plans and won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary. By and large, the portrait that emerged is historically correct. Predictably, however, conservatives were not happy when they saw the role that White people played questioned and the sins of our forefathers enumerated. In their version of history, Whites are pioneers, heroes, and saviors who brought religion, culture, and civilization to the savages. To them, denying the supremacy of the White race is tantamount to "revisionism" and "indoctrination." They also say that the "1619 Project" is divisive and does little to achieve national unity. In a number of Republican states, lawmakers have now introduced identical or similar bills aimed to prohibit "unpatriotic" content from being taught in public K-12 schools, among them Arkansas, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, and South Dakota. It is just a matter of time before Ohio joins that insurrectionist crowd. If enacted, teachers could face personal repercussions and school districts would lose funding if they used lesson plans based on the "1619 Project." – The whole debate is reminiscent of the culture war over evolution not so long ago.

Conservatives and evangelicals have long been at odds with evidence-based science. Under Pres. Trump in particular, fiction was elevated over facts. However, his house of cards imploded in the end. Fortunately, it is the facts that usually win battles and wars.

### **Beth Moore Leaves Southern Baptists**

Beth Moore, 63, is arguably the most influential white evangelical woman in America. In a recent interview with Religion News Service, the author of many authoritative books published in the millions denounced Christian nationalism, white supremacy, and misogyny and said that she is quitting the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) where "proximity to power" has become more important than the message of the gospels. "God does not belong to the SBC," she said, giving fellow Baptists permission to break away from the male-dominated church that reserves the role of head pastor for men. She is still a Baptist, Moore stated, but one that can no longer identify with Southern Baptists.

### **Actress Gina Carano Fired by Lucasfilm**

Actress Gina Carano, who played a prominent role as Cara Dune in Disney+'s "Mandalorian" series for the first 2 seasons, is no longer employed by Lucasfilm. She has also been dropped by United Talent Agency (UTA). Carano, 38, has long been known for making abhorrent, alt-right comments on social media that denigrated people based on their cultural and religious identity, questioned the results of the 2020 presidential elections, and mocked face masks and Covid-19 restrictions. Her latest post, which compared the fate of Jews in Nazi Germany with the "cancel culture" in the U.S., was too much for Disney+. There were plans for spin-offs with her in the title role, but that will not happen now. Some fans of Carano have started a petition for Disney to rehire her, but that is unlikely after Carano herself has announced a new venture with far-right podcaster Ben Shapiro and his website "The Daily Wire." She says that developing her own film has long been a dream of hers. Shapiro, once the editor of Breitbart News, has written books that claim that White, western culture is superior to others and that schools and universities "brainwash" students. It looks like Gina Carano has gone over to "the dark side" for good and joined the Sith Order.

### **"Dr. Seuss Canceled"**

March 2 was the birthday of Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel, 1904-1991). Dr. Seuss Enterprises, the company that licenses and publishes some 60 books authored by Dr. Seuss, has announced that it will no longer print 6 titles because they portray some non-white people in stereotypical ways that are hurtful and wrong. An example is "a Chinaman" depicted with a bowl of rice and chopsticks, an image contained in "And to Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street" (1937). The other 5 books that will no longer be published are "The Cat's Quizzer," "If I Ran the Zoo," "McElligot's Pool," "On Beyond Zebra," and "Scrambled Eggs Super." Dr. Seuss was not personally a racist. In later years, he consistently advocated for fairness, understanding, diversity, and sustainability to a degree that even progressives can embrace. The controversy seems silly considering the U.S. is in the midst of a pandemic that has so far killed more than 500,000 people. Needless to say, conservatives milked every drop of the story as yet another example of woke "cancel culture." For Fox News and other social media it was a welcome distraction from the testimony of FBI director before a Senate committee about the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Washington Capitol. Christopher Wray stated that the riots were "domestic terrorism," plain and simple. He said there was no evidence that members of antifa or Black Lives Matter were among the participants.

### **Did Alexander Hamilton Own Slaves?**

Contrary to an enduring myth, Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804) was not an abolitionist, according to historian Jessica Serfilippi. Instead, he was deeply entrenched in the institution of slavery, helped clients with slavery-related issues, and owned household slaves himself. Slavery was common in New York's elite in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For example, the family Hamilton married into (the powerful family of Philip Schuyler, his father-in-law) had more than 40 people enslaved at their Albany mansion and another estate. He was the largest owner of enslaved people in Albany at that time. These individuals were sometimes referred to as "servants" and "maids," but

the fact is they were bought and sold without their consent and received no wages. Serfilippi based her research on Hamilton's account ledgers, cash books, inventories, letters, and similar contemporaneous documents. For example, in March of 1796 Hamilton's cash books record a payment of \$250 to Schuyler for "2 Negro servants purchased by him for me." – Historian Ron Chernow admits in his voluminous 2004 biography that Hamilton and his wife may have owned one or two household slaves, but he still calls Hamilton an "uncompromising abolitionist." Scholarship on Northern slavery is inadequate, and to this day there are many questions about the depth of the North's involvement in slavery. Practically all founding fathers were implicated in slavery. Serfilippi's research also shines a critical light on the Federalists and the "Federalist" papers to which Hamilton was a major contributor.

### **Johns Hopkins Was No Abolitionist**

The founder of Johns Hopkins Univ. in Baltimore, Johns Hopkins (1795-1873), was not a fervent abolitionist, as the institution has been fond of telling for over a century. Instead, newly discovered census data and other records show that in 1840 and 1850 his household owned "colored servants," i.e., unpaid slaves. Maryland was one of the 4 slave states that stayed in the Union, and slavery was legal until the end of the Civil War. Johns Hopkins and his father, Samuel, were Quakers, but there is no evidence that the family ever released any enslaved people. When he founded the institution, he envisioned a hospital where Blacks would be treated in separate wards. And Johns Hopkins Univ. did not admit its first Black undergraduate until 1945. It is clear that many rosy origin stories are mere myths and legends, resting on little evidence.

### **Josh Hawley's New Book Cancelled by Publisher**

Josh Hawley is the young and ambitious Missouri Senator who helped stage the challenge to the Electoral College on Jan. 6. He has been widely rebuked both in his state and in Congress for his quixotic and irresponsible effort to undermine the legitimacy of Joe Biden's win. Many say Sen. Hawley, 41, has "blood on his hands" after the violent riots on the U.S. Capitol and are calling for his resignation. "People died because Hawley lied," one protest banner stated. No other politician, aside from President Trump, is blamed as much for inciting insurrection and for the assault on American democracy that unfolded on that fateful day. Hawley himself has rejected the calls for him to resign and said he would not apologize for giving voice to millions of Americans who question the results of the Nov. 3 election. – Simon & Schuster has now cancelled Hawley's forthcoming book, "The Tyranny of Big Tech," originally scheduled for June 2021. The book argues that Facebook, Google, Amazon, and Apple pose a grave threat to American liberty. The publisher said in a statement that it cannot support Hawley after his role in the "disturbing, deadly insurrection that took place" on Jan. 6, which posed "a dangerous threat to our democracy and freedom." After the violent assault, in which several people died, it was no longer possible to speak of a peaceful transfer of power. Hawley called Simon & Schuster's cancellation an attack on the First Amendment and said he would sue the publisher. – On his radio program Rush Limbaugh defended Josh Hawley and intentionally referred to Simon & Schuster as "Shtiman & Schuster," making it sound like a Jewish publishing house. – Update: It did not take long for Hawley to find a new home for his manuscript. Washington, D.C.-based Regnery Publishing, "America's leading publisher of conservative books" (website), announced that it is "proud" to support the senator and to issue his book later this spring.

### **Twitter Suspends Account of "MyPillow" CEO**

Mike Lindell, the CEO of MyPillow, was permanently suspended from Twitter for repeated violations of the company's civic-integrity policy. Lindell, a close associate and ally of former President Trump, is one of those individuals who continues to spread conspiracy theories and disinformation about the 2020 elections. A while back, it was reported that Lindell helped raise \$2 million bail money for Kyle Rittenhouse, the militant young man who shot and killed two demonstrators in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Lindell has an interesting past, according to MyPillow's website. He has written a memoir, "What Are the Odds?," that describes his transformation from a crack addict and professional Las Vegas gambler to the CEO of

MyPillow, which he founded in 2004. A number of retailers do not carry the MyPillow brand anymore after the insurrection at the Capitol on Jan. 6. Among them are Bed Bath & Beyond, HEB, Kohl's, and Wayfair. Dominion Voting Systems has threatened to sue Lindell over unsubstantiated accusations of election fraud.

### **"All the World's a Screen"**

"All the world's a stage," Shakespeare wrote. Today, "all the world's a screen." Even before Covid-19 hit, people spend hours staring at television, computer, and telephone screens. Today, "screen time" has easily doubled and tripled for many. Almost everything is done remotely: work and school, concerts and plays, weddings and funerals, church service and civic meetings. We consult with doctors and lawyers through Zoom conferences. Some folks spend their entire work day in front of a computer screen, followed by more screen time at home. It is a form of captivity, isn't it? One wonders what this dystopian world does to people's physical and psychological health. For one thing, there is lots of sitting involved, resulting in weight gain. The virtual world also results in the atrophy of motor skills and muscle memory. That is not good for anyone, especially not for growing children who need to be active. As the physical world recedes into distant memory, the result is alienation from each other, from reality, and from nature itself. The online world, however, is a poor substitute for the real, tangible thing. It is not surprising that many people are tired of all this nonsense and complain about "Covid fatigue" and "Zoom fatigue." Anxiety and anger, disorder and dysfunction, substance abuse and suicides are all too common these days.

### **Charles Blow: "The Devil You Know"**

New York Times columnist Charles M. Blow is an uncompromising thinker who often writes about race-related issues. His latest book, "The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto" is a bold attempt to come to grips with the systemic racism and white supremacy that is centuries old. The Great Migration north has brought little relief to Black Americans, he says. The same biases that exist in the South also exist in the North. In fact, more unarmed African-Americans get shot by law enforcement in the North than in the South. To this day, cities such as Chicago suffer from the deleterious effects of open discrimination, restrictive covenants, school segregation, inability to get bank loans, gentrification, and so on. And violence against people of color seemed only to increase in recent years. The Great Migration did not secure economic and political power for Blacks and may have been a mistake. It destroyed African-American communities in the South and separated Black elders from younger generations. To rely on White majorities to overturn White supremacy seems foolish. Black people have to do it themselves, Blow maintains. He sees the State of Georgia as a model for how Blacks can alter the political landscape and attain the power and influence long denied to them. Georgia recently defeated two Republican senators and elected two Democratic senators, one of whom is Rev. Raphael Warnock, a Black man.

### **ACLU Elects First Black President**

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has elected Deborah Archer as its next president. She is the first Black president in the organization's 101-year history. Archer, a law professor with experience in civil rights and racial justice, succeeds Susan Herman who has served as president since 2008. During the Trump administration (2017-21), the ACLU was an invaluable voice in the fight for civil rights and, according to its website, filed more than 246 lawsuits and other legal actions that challenged conservative policies regarding voting rights, LGBT rights, immigrant rights, and other issues. The ACLC's day-to-day operations are currently managed by Executive Director Anthony Romero. To learn more about the ACLC, visit [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org).

### **"Black Dollar Index" Ranks Corporate America**

A new "Black Dollar Index" (BDI), created by Kelle Rozell and others, ranks corporate America on a scale of 0 to 100 based on how many Black employees they have, the number of racial-discrimination claims against them, and their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. To date, 105 companies have been assessed based on the above criteria. Fourteen of them (14%) were "Black

Dollar"-approved, among them Allstate (90), American Express (82), AT&T (89), Nike (81), Under Armour (81), and UPS (92). The next tier, "fair," includes Bank of America, Best Buy, Clorox, Netflix, Target, Verizon, Walmart, and Wells Fargo. However, many companies hover at or near the bottom. For example, Cracker Barrel has a rating of 21, Kohl's a rating of 20, and Kroger a rating of 16. The lowest possible score – zero – went to Cheesecake Factory, TGI Friday's, and Trader's Joe. Many more businesses are being added as more public information becomes available. To read the complete rankings, go to [www.blackdollarindex.com](http://www.blackdollarindex.com). The "Black Dollar Index" is useful because there is often a wide gap between the hollow claims companies make and the reality on the ground. Currently, only 4 Fortune 500 CEO's are Black. Less than 2% of the senior-most executives in America's 50 largest companies are Black. The BDI also empowers consumers who care about racial justice and equity. Black spending power is on track to reach \$1.8 trillion by 2024, according to Nielsen research. To date, most of that money goes to white-owned companies.

### **Conservative Companies (Not) to Buy From**

In "The Blue State Conservative," guest author "G Zen Conservative" has written a number of articles about what "leftist" and "woke" companies conservatives should boycott. On Jan. 27, he produced a list of 17 companies that conservatives should actively support. Here they are: Goya Foods; The Daily Wire; MyPillow; Palmetto Cheese; Hobby Lobby; Las Vegas Sands Corp.; Cracker Barrel; Sturm, Ruger & Company; Cintas Corporation; Parler; Gab; Regnery Publishing; Altria; Daniel Defense; Home Depot; Bass Pro Shops; and Sheetz. You will notice that "G Zen Conservative" likes Trump, White supremacy, hate-speech forums, nicotine products, and AK-15s.

Most companies are well known, but one caught our attention: Sheetz Inc. The restaurant / gas station is opening two locations in Delaware this year, the first on April 26. Since Sheetz is an unknown newcomer in Central Ohio, you might be interested in learning what "G Zen Generation" has to say about it: *"Sheetz is a chain of gas stations and convenience stores owned by the Sheetz family, which is almost entirely a Republican family. Additionally, the company itself has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to Republicans over the years, including tens of thousands of dollars in 2020. If you need to fill up your car or get a case of beer, shop at Sheetz. If you do so, you'll be supporting conservatism."* We verified the above information, and it is correct. It goes without saying that the folks associated with "Community Matters" do not plan to be frequent customers of the restaurant chain...

The above information was found at "TheRighting," a daily online service founded by Howard Polskin that provides a useful and informative digest of articles published within the right-wing media world.

### **Obama Library in Chicago**

After years of delay, construction of the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago will proceed later this year, perhaps as early as August. The multi-building complex will sit on 19 acres of the 540-acre Jackson Park on the city's South Side and include a public library, museum, athletic center, a children's play area, and a test kitchen. (Michelle Obama famously promoted gardening and healthy food.) Funding will be raised through private donations. The cost is estimated to be about \$500 million. Delays occurred because Jackson Park is on the National Register of Historic Places. Park preservationists had objections, prompting a 4-year federal review. As soon as Pres. Biden was sworn in on Jan. 20, the federal review was suddenly and miraculously "completed," allowing the project to move ahead.

### **You May Thank an Immigrant**

Countless doctors, researchers, and biotech entrepreneurs fighting Covid-19 are immigrants. Scientists born outside the U.S. have played a crucial and indispensable role in the development of new vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna, and other companies. Even the chief adviser to Operation Warp Speed, the Trump administration's vaccine distribution program, was an immigrant – Moncef Slaoui from Morocco. (He resigned Jan. 12 to give the Biden administration a free hand.) Many Americans think that immigrants are a threat or a burden and want to keep them out. The Trump administration in particular has reduced the number of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants



to almost nothing. However, that is a grave mistake. Immigrants bring fresh energy and ideas to America, which increasingly suffers from entropy and atrophy. If the U.S. wants to maintain a global leadership role, it must remain open and receptive to global talent. Moderna's chairman, Noubar Afeyan from Lebanon, says there is a link between the immigrant experience, risk-taking, and innovation: "I think of innovation as a form of intellectual immigration. You leave your comforts behind you. You face unrecognizable challenges. You take nothing for granted."

### **Rush Limbaugh Dead at Age 70**

Conservative talk-show host Rush H. Limbaugh (1951-2021) died on Feb. 17 at the age of 70 at his home in Palm Beach, Florida. He announced a year ago that he had terminal stage-4 lung cancer. Limbaugh had the largest audience of any conservative radio personality. Millions listened to him on a regular basis. Estimates vary wildly, however. Nielsen puts the number at 15.5 million, but some numbers went as high as 20 million or even 39 and 43 million. For fellow travelers, Limbaugh was a patriot, an icon, a giant, a megastar, a hero, or the GOAT (greatest of all times). Pres. Trump awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in February 2020. Others believed he was a harmless entertainer, charlatan, crackpot, and carnival barker. Liberals, on the other hand, were appalled by his relentless logorrhea of racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, bigotry, anti-environmentalism, and more. His talk shows were toxic diatribes full of grievances, anger, insults, hate, distrust, paranoia, and conspiracy theories. For example, Limbaugh claimed that Pres. Obama was not born in America and Pres. Biden did not legitimately win the 2020 elections. His syndicated radio show was a commercial success that made him fabulously rich, but he also had a long history of health problems and drug addiction. There is no question that Rush Limbaugh was an influential voice who helped get Republicans and Trump elected, but many would consider him "unmournable."

### **marsh girl**

out in the marsh  
where the creatures roam  
the soggy land  
greet the ocean foam

out in the marsh  
soar the eagles  
fish the pelicans  
and forage the seagulls

out in the marsh  
where the crawdads sing  
lives a matted girl  
a shy and feral thing

out in the marsh  
the world is raw  
man and beast follow  
a different law

out in the marsh  
the land and sea merge  
inside the heart too  
swells a tidal surge

out in the marsh  
there is no history  
the comings and goings  
are shrouded in mystery

out in the marsh  
herons and egrets  
witness love and crime  
but keep their secrets

out in the marsh  
birds lift from the branch  
the girl would fly sky-high too

if given the chance

## **THE WORLD**

### **Global Covid-19 Cases**

More than 180 nations worldwide have confirmed cases of the coronavirus. The following have the highest numbers (as of 3/12):

US: 29,286,142  
India: 11,308,846  
Brazil: 11,277,717  
Russia: 4,321,588  
UK: 4,254,714  
France: 4,050,558  
Spain: 3,178,356  
Italy: 3,149,017  
Turkey: 2,835,989  
Germany: 2,546,526

The latest Covid-19 figures indicate that the world has seen a total of 118.7 million cases, with more than 2.6 million deaths. In the U.S., 527,726 people have died of a total of 29 million cases. In Ohio, the figure is 986,740 cases, with 17,871 dead. The Delaware Public Health District reports a total of 14,845 cases and 104 fatalities.

### **Military Seizes Power in Myanmar**

Ignoring the results of the last election, the army seized power in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma / Birma), dissolved the civilian government, and declared a state of emergency. Hundreds of political and cultural leaders were detained, incl. Aung San Suu Kyi and Pres. Win Myint, and dozens of protesters have reportedly been killed by police. It is not entirely clear why the military, which has a constitutionally enshrined presence in Myanmar, has resorted to this step. However, its political party (the Union Solidarity and Development Party) was outperformed last November by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, which won 83% of the votes. The army claims election fraud. It seems it is not willing to accept a secondary role. In addition, General Min Aung Hlaing, the military leader, is said to have political ambitions of his own. – Western governments condemned the coup. U.S. Pres. Biden said in a statement, "the military's seizure of power in Burma, the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and other civilian officials, and the declaration of a national state of emergency are a direct assault on the country's transition to democracy and the rule of law."

### **North Korean Leader Admits Mistakes**

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has admitted that his country's economic policies were a failure: "Almost all sectors fell a long way short of the objectives," he told thousands of delegates at the recent 8th Congress of the Workers Party in Pyongyang. Natural disasters, international sanctions, mismanagement have all taken a toll. The border to China remains closed because of Covid-19, leading to few imports and exports. The lack of border trade has caused food shortages and a spike in prices. Kim admitted no personal responsibility. Instead, he blamed problems on underlings. He did not lay out a plan for a new course, but emphasized the need for "self-reliance" and "self-sufficiency." He also did not mention the new U.S. administration other than saying that America remains "our foremost principal enemy." Kim Jong-Un also made clear that North Korea has no intention to denuclearize; its nuclear program is more ambitious than ever. The country remains of the most isolated places on Earth.

### **China's Influence in Africa Grows**

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has become the 45th country in Africa to sign the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). At the same time, China agreed to offer \$17 million in help and to cancel loans in the amount of about \$28 million. The BRI has funded large infrastructure projects around the world, including highways, railroads, seaports, and power plants. It is a brilliant investment that gives China long-term access to foreign countries and markets. Even some European countries have taken advantage of the offer. Is it a pact with the devil, though? Critics speak of the BRI as "a debt trap," but it is clear that China has been very successful in

constructing an economic network that spans the globe. The U.S., on the other hand, has done diddly. The Trump administration in particular was hostile any kind of foreign aid. The U.S. still has a strong military presence in numerous countries, but for the people there it is hard to see how this benefits them. The vacuum created by the U.S. is being filled by China, which is poised to dominate the world (and perhaps even space) in the foreseeable future.

### **Dam Break in India**

Nearly 200 people are missing and feared dead in northern India after a 13-megawatt hydroelectric dam collapsed. A portion of the Himalayan Nanda Devi glacier had broken off and triggered an avalanche of boulders, ice, mud, and water that swept the Rishiganga dam away, badly damaged another, and destroyed bridges. Utility workers and residents had almost no time to prepare for the flood. The disaster happened in Uttarakhand, a state that borders China and Nepal. Scientists and environmentalists have long warned against dams and power plants, roads and trains in that area because of frequent landslides and flooding, but they were ignored by government officials who are pushing for "growth and development" as well as infrastructure projects that support the military. The Himalaya's glaciers are melting, disintegrating, and retreating due to climate change, causing much instability in that part of the world.

### **Riots in the Netherlands**

After the Netherlands imposed a 9 pm to 4:30 am curfew to halt the spread of Covid-19, rioters took to the streets in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and other cities. For several days, they overturned cars, smashed windows, plundered shops, set fires, and clashed with police. It was the worst violence in decades. Prime Minister Mark Rutte dismissed the rioters as "criminals," but it is noteworthy that the lockdown is the first stay-at-home order imposed since the Nazi occupation during WW II. On the other hand, it is obvious that smashing cars and looting shops for alcohol and cigarettes has little to do with the coronavirus. This is an emerging story and many details are not yet known. However, it is suspected that misinformation disseminated by social media played a role. It is also believed that members of the anti-immigrant group PEGIDA and other right-wing parties may have had a hand in the unrest. – The next general elections are scheduled for March 17.

### **Alexei Navalny Returns to Russia, Is Arrested**

Alexei Navalny is a brave man. He was poisoned by Russian agents, nearly died, and spent months in a German hospital. He could have stayed in Western Europe. However, he was determined to return to his native Russia and did so in January. Upon arriving in Moscow, he was promptly arrested by the police. He has since been convicted and sent to a penal colony. Navalny, 44, is obviously a prisoner of conscience no matter the threadbare arguments the Russian legal system may conjure up against him. The international community is on his side and will no doubt exert pressure on President Putin to release him immediately. U.S. President Biden will not be "Putin's poodle" the way his predecessor was. It is hard to understand why authoritarian leaders are so irrationally afraid of opposition figures and compelled to silence them. However, even the slightest doubt about the legitimacy of their power is something countries like Russia and China cannot tolerate. The Nazis felt about destabilization the same way. It is an admission that these regimes must be weaker than they are willing to admit.

### **65 Media Workers Killed in 2020**

The International Federation of Journalists reports that a total of 65 journalists and other media workers such as photographers were killed worldwide in 2020 while doing their jobs. This is 17 more than in 2019, a disturbing increase of 35%. The deaths took place in 16 different countries. In addition, the IFJ reports that more than 200 journalists are currently in jail or prison because of their work.

### **Canada Calls Proud Boys a Terrorist Entity**

Canada has designated the Proud Boys as a terrorist entity, citing the "pivotal role" the group played in the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. Public Safety Minister Bill Blair called the group a dangerous, neo-fascist organization that promulgates white

supremacy and engages in political violence. Canada is home to many Proud Boys chapters. In fact, the group was founded in 2016 by Canadian Gavin McInnes. As a result of the new designation, members of the Proud Boys may see heightened surveillance and could have their property and assets seized if found to engage in terrorist acts. The entire Canadian list of extremist groups now includes 73 organizations, incl. the right-wing Atomwaffen Division and The Base. – In the U.S., far-right domestic terrorism is still not viewed as a primary threat by many. Former Pres. Trump encouraged the Proud Boys "to stand by" and personally met with their leader, Enrique Tarrio.

### **Oil Spill Pollutes Israel's Beaches**

Israel is currently experiencing its biggest and most devastating maritime disaster in many years. A suspected oil-tanker leak polluted nearly 90% of the country's 120-mile-long shoreline, from the northern border with Lebanon all the way south near Gaza Strip. Black tar also washed north to Lebanon. Thousands of volunteers and soldiers removed chunks of black, sticky tar from the beaches. Removal is difficult in rocky terrain. Tar exposure can make people sick and irritate the skin. Another challenge is that Israel relies heavily on desalinized water. The tar pollution is also negatively impacting wildlife such as fish, birds, sea turtles, and mollusks. It is not yet clear which ship was responsible for the leak, but European and Israeli investigators are reviewing maritime records and data from weather satellites. It is feared that the impact may last for years to come.

## **ANIMAL KINGDOM**

### **Seresto Flea Collar Linked to 1,700 Pet Deaths**

The EPA is in charge of regulating products that contain pesticides and other harmful substances, but the agency hasn't done its job in decades. Bayer's Seresto flea and tick collars, for instance, have been linked to 1,700 pet deaths, tens of thousands of injured animals, and nearly 1,000 harmed humans since their introduction in 2012, as shown by EPA documents. Through June 2020, the agency has received more than 75,000 incident reports related to the collars, but it has turned a blind eye to the problem and has not informed the public about the risk. Pet owners should stop using Seresto flea and tick collars for dogs and cats immediately, and veterinarians should no longer recommend them.

### **Alaska Iditarod Underway**

The 2021 Alaska Iditarod starts March 7. Several changes were made to the dog-sledding race. Instead of ending in Nome, the 852-mile long trail is a loop that takes mushers and their dogs back to Anchorage. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, spectators are not permitted, social distancing must be maintained, and masks are required even on the trail. Some 48 mushers, both veterans and rookies, are expected to participate. A week ahead, there is also a much shorter Junior Iditarod. Ten mushers, ages 14 to 17, participated this year. – Animal-rights groups have long protested against the Iditarod, which takes a heavy toll on the dogs. Thousands of huskies and other dogs have been injured or fell ill. At least 150 have died over the course of the race's history. There are no records of how many canines have died after the race, in training, or were destroyed because they did not meet expectations. Some corporate sponsors have pulled out of the Iditarod for that reason.

### **Biden Overturns Trump's Anti-Bird Policy**

The Biden administration has reversed a controversial policy imposed by former Pres. Trump that dramatically weakened the century-old Migratory Bird Treaty, which banned both the intentional and the accidental (incidental) killing of birds. Trump attempted to end criminal prosecutions against companies responsible for bird deaths that could have been prevented. The 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which killed some 100,000 birds, led to a \$100 million settlement. Under the Trump policy, BP would have walked away scot-free. The Trump administration encouraged fracking, mining, logging, and ranching and was openly hostile toward public lands, nature, and the environment. It also dismissed climate change as "a hoax."

### **Florida Takes Steps to Protect Its Manatees**

Florida is the nation's boating capital. As a result, however, hundreds and thousands of manatees have died over the years from boating-related injuries. In 2020, there were 595 manatees found dead, in 2019 there were 564 reported deaths. Only about two-third of these deaths are investigated. In addition, there is an unknown number of manatees whose deaths was never reported. Hard number are difficult to come by, but experts estimate that between 15% and 25% of all manatee deaths are due to boat strikes. The slow-moving animals are hard to see under the surface and are often struck. The majority of them has scars inflicted by boat propellers. Manatees can also die from cold spells, diseases, toxic algae, oil spills, habitat loss, and old age. Their total population in Florida is estimated to be just above 6,000. – Many Floridian boaters do feel as if they have a free license to recklessly operate their boats without a proper understanding of safety hazards, navigation, and wildlife. They are unaware that they are sharing estuaries, streams and lakes with wildlife. Banning powerful motorboats from some of Florida's waterways, however, would not be politically acceptable in the Republican state. At one point, the conservative Tea Party vociferously protested additional protection measures: "We cannot elevate nature above people. It's against the Bible and the Bill of Rights." Instead, the state is now attempting to better educate the public. Newly written draft legislation would require every boater to complete a safety course and have a safety ID card, beginning Jan. 1, 2023. It is doubtful that this measure alone will make much of a difference in the lives of manatees, but it will hopefully save some individuals. What is really needed is the creation of more manatee sanctuaries, more slow-speed zones, and a ban of motorboats in areas heavily populated by manatees. Despite what the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says, manatees remain an endangered and/or threatened species.

#### **UK Plans to Give Oral Contraceptives to Grey Squirrels**

There are more than 3 million grey squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) in Britain, originally imported from the United States, and England and Scotland are at war with them. The UK considers them an "invasive" intruders and wants them gone. It certainly appears to be true that grey squirrels are displacing the slightly smaller and less aggressive native red squirrel population (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and thus pose a challenge to biodiversity. USA Today reported in 2008 that about 120,000 red squirrels remain, and 75% of them are in Scotland. But British authorities also contend that grey squirrels cause up to £1.8 billion damage each year by stripping bark from trees. That supposedly threatens government efforts to tackle climate change by planting new woodlands – a very far-fetched argument indeed. It is thanks to squirrels that tree seeds get disseminated widely and lead to new growth. In any case, the organization behind the proposal to administer oral contraceptives to grey squirrels is the UK Squirrel Accord (UKSA), a partnership of forestry and conservation organizations and government agencies. Britain's Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith and Prince Charles are also on board with the effort. The Royal Forestry Society has called for a brutal "cull," but the UKSA proposed a more "humane" method instead. The idea is to lure the "invasive rodents" into feeding stations that only they can access. Hazelnut paste spiked with an oral contraceptive awaits them there. – It is not clear what would prevent a red squirrel from entering a feeding box. It is also noteworthy that the UK recently passed the 100,000 mark of Covid-19 deaths – the highest per-capita death rate in the world. It seems peculiar that so much time, effort, and resources will be spent on the squirrel problem when the country has so many other pressing issues, incl. the problems surrounding Brexit.

#### **Shark Attacks**

According to a report released by the International Shark Attack File, sharks killed 10 people around the world in 2020. Six of the deaths were in Australian waters, three in the U.S.: on each in Hawaii, California, and Maine. The other death was in St. Martin's. In addition, there were a number of nonfatal shark attacks: 57 in total, well below the average of 80 per year. Considering how many people and sharks there are in the world, hostile encounters between humans and sharks are exceedingly rare. It is possible for sharks to mistake people as seals or other prey. However, far more people are killed by domestic animals (e.g., dogs and horses) each year and by insects such as bees and wasps. Fears of sharks are exaggerated.

The real danger in our daily lives are things like cancer and heart attacks, cars and guns, bathtubs and ladders.

#### **Shark Populations Threatened with Extinction**

A new study published in the British journal "Nature" says that populations of oceanic sharks have declined by an alarming rate of 71% since 1970. Although pollution and climate change pose a risk to the animals as well, it is overfishing that is the primary cause. Sharks are hunted for their fins, but often they are also caught as "bycatch" in the course of fishing for tuna or swordfish. Several shark species have declined to such an extent that they are now classified as critically endangered. – There are almost 500 known shark species. Some are large, many are tiny. Not all are carnivorous. Whale sharks, for instance, feed exclusively on plankton.

#### **Pesticides Found in Deer**

The Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources has found high concentrations of neonicotinoids in 61% of 800 tested deer spleens. The numbers are at or above threshold levels, but more research is needed to determine if the insecticide buildup is high enough to threaten individual animals and their fawns. Neonicotinoids are a group of pesticides that also have a devastating effect on pollinators such as honeybees and other insects. Their use is so widespread that they are ubiquitous. Swiss researchers found in 2017 that 75% of 200 honey samples from around the world were contaminated with the pesticide. The European Union has banned several neonicotinoids on flowering plants in open-air settings. Some U.S. cities have also outlawed them. The main manufacturers of "neonics" – Bayer, Monsanto (now owned by Bayer), and Syngenta – dispute that their product is harmful. They maintain that "Roundup" and other pesticides are necessary for food security.

#### **Cicadas Emerge after 17 Years**

After 17 years of living underground in nymph form, cicadas will emerge in large numbers this year. Brood X, the Great Eastern Brood, is expected to invade 16 states, incl. Ohio, when the temperature reaches 64°F. In the past, they tended to emerge May 26-29. With climate change and warmer temperatures, it is now May 12-15 that they can be first detected. When the brood last emerged in 2004, it blanketed much of western Ohio. Cicadas can be pretty loud, too. Groups of male cicadas have been recorded to hit up to 96 decibels. However, the large insects are perfectly harmless to humans, animals, and plants. They don't bite and are not drawn indoors. The nymphs feed on sap from underground tree roots. The adults likewise don't "eat" per se, but drink plant sap when available. Cicadas and their lifecycle are one of great mysteries of the world. There is absolutely no reason to kill them.

## **HAPPY NEWS**



#### **Harriet Tubman May Be on \$20 Bill After All**

Harriet Tubman (1820? – 1913) was a brave American abolitionist who helped countless slaves to freedom, perhaps more than 300. She was the most famous and successful conductor on the Underground Railroad. The Biden administration is now resuming efforts, stalled by the Trump administration, to redesign the \$20 bill to feature Tubman. The current image of Pres. Andrew Jackson, a slaveholder, would be moved to the bill's reverse side. Pres. Trump, a fan of the fellow populist, disparaged the change. He frequently defended Confederate generals who fought to preserve slavery and attacked Black culture and identity. So far, no U.S. currency has ever shown the face of an African-American.

#### **Oregon Decriminalizes Possession of All Drugs**



Oregon has taken the courageous step of decriminalizing the possession of all drugs. Instead of a criminal-justice based approach, the state is pivoting to a health-care-based approach that relies on treatment instead of jail and prison. It is clear that alcohol, nicotine, and drugs can lead to negative health outcomes, but it is better to view substance abuse as a medical issue rather than a criminal issue. It is also far more expensive to incarcerate someone than to treat and rehabilitate them. Oregon's law went into effect Feb. 1 and will be implemented over the next decade by the Oregon Health Authority. On the campaign trail, Pres. Biden said, "No one should be going to jail because they have a drug problem" and expressed support for drug-diversion programs. – For the record: "Community Matters" does not endorse the use of drugs, alcohol, and nicotine. We believe in the ancient motto, "A healthy mind in a healthy body." However, Oregon's new policy is on the right side of history.

### **California City Bans New Gas Stations**

The City of Petaluma in California has voted to permanently ban new gas stations, following a 2-year moratorium. Also banned is the addition of more pumps to existing stations. This makes Petaluma the first municipality in the nation to halt new gas stations. The decision is tied to the city's climate plan to get to zero emissions by 2030. It also encourages the use of more electric cars and electric charging stations. A community-wide Coalition Opposing New Gas Stations (CONGAS) played an instrumental role to get the ban enacted. The city of about 60,000 currently has 16 gas stations, with another one already approved. Council members feel that this an adequate number to meet the demand.

### **Bethany Christian Services Welcomes LGBTQ Parents**

Bethany Christian Services, the nation's largest Protestant adoption and foster care agency, has announced that it would begin to provide services to LGBTQ parents nationwide, effective immediately. The change was announced by Chris Palusky, the organization's president and CEO. In the past, Bethany maintained that marriage is between one man and one woman. Gay couples were rejected and referred to other service providers. As a matter of fact, Bethany still does not endorse same-sex relationships. However, for several reasons the landscape is shifting. Modern Christians increasingly believe that one's sexual orientation is of secondary importance. In addition, more state and municipal entities require agencies to be more inclusive in exchange for government contracts. Most importantly, however, Bethany believes in the message of the gospels. "We will now offer services with the love and compassion of Jesus to the many types of families who exist in our world today," Palusky wrote in an email. It would be a great thing if more "Christians" embraced the unconditional love and compassion of Jesus instead of practicing rejection and segregation.

### **Illinois Dumps Cash-Bail System**

Illinois legislators have voted to drop the controversial cash-bail system. People with means walk free while awaiting trial, but poor people – often minorities – languish weeks and months in jails and prisons if they cannot post bail. During the Covid-19 pandemic, thousands of incarcerated folks became infected and died despite the fact that their criminal guilt had not yet been proven. For them, the cash-bail system was a death sentence. Illinois' reform does not go into effect right away. Across the nation, police and sheriff departments, prosecutors and judges are predominantly opposed to criminal-justice reform. They fear it might erode some of the revenue and power of their monopolistic industry.

### **Alex Trebek's Wardrobe Donated to Homeless Men**

The host of "Jeopardy!" for 37 years, Alex Trebek (1940-2020), left behind a large wardrobe of suits, sport coats, dress shirts, polo shirts, 300 neckties, shoes, and other clothes. His son, Matthew Trebek, and the producer of "Jeopardy!" decided jointly to donate them to formerly homeless and/or incarcerated men who are looking for a fresh start. New-York based Doe Fund, a nonprofit, provides classes, services, housing, and job opportunities to men who have been in prison and/or are homeless. Trebek's clothes will go to men who have completed career-training classes and are getting ready for job interviews. Alex Trebek envisioned "a gentler, kinder society" and

has supported a range of charities during his life, including helping the homeless in Los Angeles.



### **First Lady Pushes for Free Community Colleges**

Dr. Jill Biden, an educator, is pushing free access to community colleges and training programs. She made her remarks during a virtual summit hosted by the American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees. As a presidential candidate, Joe Biden also promised 2 years of community college or training "without debt." Republicans politicians have long supported the idea of a greater focus on vocational training (to the detriment of the liberal arts, of course), and some may support the idea. The U.S. lags badly behind other industrialized nations when it comes to education. European universities by and large charge no tuition. – Dr. Biden has been an educator for more than 3 decades. She is still teaching English at her community college, although it is virtual these days. Her other passions are cancer research and support for military families.

### **North Carolina Creates "Forest Bath" Trail**

"Forest Bathing" originated in Japan as a type of nature therapy. Known there as shinrin-yoku, it involves the immersion in nature to improve one's body, mind, and soul. Studies have shown that forest bathing can indeed reduce stress and anxiety. While hiking the Kumano Kodo Trail in Japan, Bob Hillyer got the idea to create a similar forest-bathing trail in his home state of North Carolina where he is a member of the Elkin Valley Trails Association. The group has now started to build such a trail, dubbed Klondike Lake Trail. It is part of a larger network of trails that includes the new Carter Falls Trail near Grassy Creek Vineyard off U.S. 21. A sign at the trail head asks people to be quiet, turn off their phones, and put their ear plugs in their pockets. The forest should indeed be experienced as a quiet sanctuary where people can see, touch, and smell nature all around them. Marc Farrow, a guide with the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy (ANFT), says that people sometimes mistake "forest bathing" as a nudist activity. While many countries offer naturist beaches and trails, people who engage in "forest bathing" are typically fully clothed.

### **France Protects Its Sensory Heritage**

France is a country deeply attached to "terroir," the soil, and its agrarian roots. It comes as little surprise then that France's lower house of Parliament and the Senate unanimously passed a law that protects the acoustic and olfactory sensory heritage of the countryside. Natural sounds and smells are part of normal country life and part of the national heritage, the new law states, and there is nothing newcomers can do about it. Over the years, there have been complaints by tourists and suburban folks about roosters crowing, cows mooing, donkeys braying, sheep bleating, ducks quacking, frogs croaking, and even cicadas singing. The legislation provides local mayors and judges with clearer guidance about how to handle possible conflicts.

### **Emily Dickinson (1830-1886).**

#### **"If I can stop one heart from breaking"**

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain;  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.