

Community Matters

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

**May 2021
Vol. 6, No. 11**

**Send info, articles, questions & comments to
delawarecommunitymatters@gmail.com**

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Constitution of the State of Ohio (Article 1, § 11): "Every citizen may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of the right; and no law shall be passed to restrain or abridge the liberty of speech, or of the press. In all criminal prosecutions for libel, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury, and if it shall appear to the jury that the matter charged as libelous is true, and was published with good intentions, and for justifiable ends, the party shall be acquitted."



springtime

the powers that be greenlit the show
and look how everything is eager to grow
now streaming live in a nearby venue
the special event offers a delicious menu
the epic production is truly a jewel
it features eternal hope and renewal
the theatrical play is sensational
and perhaps even transformational
the director pulled out all the stops
and spared no expense on the props
the colors alone are a feast for the eyes
surely the show will win the prize
but since it won't last come visit today
you miss the splendor if you delay

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Boardman Arts Park Hosts Community Day (5/1)

The Boardman Arts Park between W. William and W. Winter streets invites the community to visit the park on Sat., May 1. There are various events from about 8 am through 4 pm, suitable for the entire family.



DCHS Offers Walking Tour (5/1-2)

The Delaware County Historical Society (DCHS) presents "Stories of a Community: Walking Tour of Delaware's South End" on Sat., May 1 and Sun., May 2 (1 pm, 2:30 pm and 4 pm). The guide will be Watson Walker, Jr., a volunteer with the Society and president of the Delaware County Genealogical Society. The 90-minute tour begins at Woodward Elementary School. This is a ticketed event (\$15 for non-members, \$10 for members). To learn more and/or to register, go to www.delawareohiohistory.org.

First Friday in May (5/7)

The themes for First Friday in May (5/7, 6-9 pm) are "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" and "Putter around Town." There will be an 18-hole miniature putt-putt course in downtown Delaware. Pick up tickets (\$5 per person) and score cards at Main Street Delaware's Welcome Center at 20 E. William St., the second building east of City Hall. Those who wish to participate in the 13th annual Walk must do so on their own. There will be no fixed time and route. Please wear a mask and practice physical distance. As usual, downtown stores and restaurants will have extended hours.



Jeremy Rosario at Gallery 22 (5/7)

The next exhibition at Gallery 22 is "Life Together: Selected Works," featuring two dozen works by Delaware artist Jeremy Rosario (Maldonado). The show runs from May 7 through June 26. The painter was born in Puerto Rico, attended the Escuela Central de Artes Visuales in San Juan, and has a BFA from Columbus College of Art & Design. The subjects of his empathetic portraits are all ordinary, humble people from the local community, incl. immigrants and homeless folks. An example is Mary Rose (see above) who gets around in a 3-wheel electric scooter. Visitors may recognize some of their fellow residents. Gallery 22 and its affiliated G22 gift shop is located at 22 E. Winter St. It now has new, expanded hours: Thursdays from 11 am to 5 pm, and Fridays & Saturdays from 12-8:30 pm. Please wear a mask.

"Communities against Hate" Rallies (5/15)

Attacks against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have spiked in recent years. As part of the National Asian Heritage Month, AAPI communities are holding "Community against Hate" rallies across the country on Sat., May 15. In Central Ohio, in-person events are planned in Dublin (Coffman Park), Lewis Center (Orange Bridge Park, 4-6 pm), and Reynoldsburg (Huber Park). For more info and times, visit the Facebook page of the Ohio Chapter of the Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs (APAPA) organization and/or the website www.communityagainsthate.org.

OWU's Symphonic Wind Ensemble Performs (5/17)

OWU's Symphonic Wind Ensemble, conducted by faculty member Dr. Richard Edwards, release the recording of its latest concert on Mon., May 17 (8 pm). Two of the longer pieces are "Paris

Sketches" by Martin Ellerby and 5 scenes from "The Louvre" by Norman Dello Joio. The performance is archived online at www.owu.edu/stream.

OWU Performs "Astronomer Dreaming" (5/18)

"Astronomer Dreaming," presented by OWU's Dept. of Music in conjunction with the Dept. of Theatre & Dance, is a unique and collaborative theatre & music performance directed by faculty member Dr. Jason Hiester. The pre-recorded joint production will be streamed live on Tues., May 18 (7 pm) and archived online at www.owu.edu/stream. Learn more at www.owu.edu/music.

Farmer's Market Resumes (5/22)

The 2021 Farmer's Market begins Sat., May 22 and will run through Oct. 30. According to the short video on Main Street Delaware's website, it will once again be held Saturdays from 9 am – 12 pm and Wednesdays from 3-6 pm along Sandusky St. north of Williams St. The Delaware Farmer's Market typically offers seasonal fresh produce, baked goods, honey, flowers & plants, arts & crafts, and homemade pottery and soap.

OWU Commencement (5/29)

OWU is celebrating its commencement ceremony for the Class of 2020 and the Class of 2021 in person on Sat., May 29 (10 am), in Selby Stadium on Henry St. The single ceremony will feature remarks from one student representing the Class of '20 and one representing the Class of '21. Based on the guidelines from local public health officials, each graduate is able to invite up to four guests. (This guideline may change.) Facial coverings are required. Graduates must pre-register. There will be no Commencement Brunch or departmental receptions before or after Commencement. Baccalaureate for the Class of '21 will be a virtual experience. For family members unable to attend, OWU will be livestreaming the event on its website.

First Friday in June (6/4)

First Friday in June will be a "Street Fest" (Fri., June 4, 6-9 pm). Sandusky St. will be closed from Spring St. to Central Ave. Enjoy live music and entertainers!

Juneteenth Celebration (6/19)

Delaware celebrates Juneteenth in person on Sat., June 19 (10 am – 2 pm) at Blue Limestone Park. June 19 is the day to commemorate the end of slavery in the U.S.

Ironman 70.3 (7/25)

Ironman is scheduled to take place Sun., July 25, 2021. The triathlon consists of a swim in the Delaware Lake (1.2 miles), a 56-mile bike ride in Delaware & Marion counties, and a 13.1-mile run.

CITY OF DELAWARE

City of Delaware in May 2021

City Council meets Mon., May 10 & 24 (7 pm). The May 10 meeting includes a public hearing on the city's plan to expand its Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA). A special executive meeting of City Council will take place Wed., May 19 (6 pm) to discuss "pending or imminent court action"; the executive session is closed to the public. Additional meetings of commissions, committees & boards include Public Works / Utilities (Tues., May 4, 6 pm), Planning (Wed., May 5, 6:30 pm) and Historic Preservation (Wed., May 26, 6:30 pm). Public Works (May 4) and Board of Zoning (May 12) were cancelled. Parks and Recreation (May 25) is postponed until Tues., June 8 (6:30 pm). It is possible for more meetings to be cancelled due to a lack of agenda items or a lack of quorum. Meetings continue to be held remotely.

City Hall Is Open to the Public

A notice on the City's Facebook page indicates that portions of City Hall are now open to the public. The building was gutted and renovated this past winter. Entire walls were removed and replaced with glass. Cameras, television screens, and speakers are being installed the week of May 10, according to statements made during

the last City Council meeting. Security is tight, it seems, but there are no metal detectors. It also looks like that from now on there will be room for fewer chairs in the Council Chambers. Because of Covid-19, all meetings continue to be held online for the time being.

"Recreation Needs Assessment"

The City of Delaware discussed the "Recreation Needs Assessment" prepared by PROS Consulting in 2020 during a work session on Mon., April 5 (6:30 pm). The report was presented to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and approved by the body on Sept. 22, 2020. The 200-page document was included in the agenda packet for the meeting. PROS Consulting presented an oral summary, accompanied by an update by Ted Miller, Director of Parks & Natural Resources. The assessment report lays the groundwork for the City's next "Parks Master Plan," which will guide the growth and provide direction for the future of parks and recreation in Delaware.

"Delaware Together" Comprehensive Plan

According to David Efland, this is the timeline for Delaware's 2021 Comprehensive Plan: the Planning Commission heard a PowerPoint presentation at a work session on March 17. The plan was formally introduced to and approved by the Planning Commission at its April 7 meeting. It went to City Council next. The first reading occurred on Mon., April 12, followed by a 2nd reading and public hearing on April 26. Unless controversial items emerge, the expectation is that the plan will be adopted at the 3rd reading on May 10.



Delaware Has New Watershed / Sustainability Coordinator

Erin Wolfe is the new Watershed & Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Delaware. She took over for Caroline Cicerchi at the beginning of the year. Her LinkedIn account says she has a B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of Cincinnati (2015), with a minor in Geology. Since then, she has worked as an Environmental Interpretation Intern at the Cincinnati Nature Center, as a Park Ranger for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and as an Outreach Coordinator for the Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District (2019-21). She is physically located at the Public Utilities Dept. at 225 Cherry St. Her phone no. is 740-203-1905, and her email is ewolfe@delawareohio.net. – Sadly, the Watershed / Sustainability Coordinator is low on the totem pole and does not play a central role within the city administration. His or her authority is extremely limited, and s/he is not consulted about new development projects.

Delaware Expands "DORA"

Many cities in Central Ohio, incl. Delaware, have instituted designated outdoor refreshment areas (DORA) where alcoholic beverages can be legally consumed. The initiative was a success in the eyes of the City of Delaware. None of the feared and anticipated problems arose. City Council is now poised to expand DORA in several ways. Most importantly, new days and hours will be added (Mon. – Sun., 11 am – midnight). 2. Mixed drinks and spirituous liquor will be added to beer and wine. DORA is likely to become a permanent feature, subject to periodic reassessments. Several City Council members indicated their approval when Tom Homan first mentioned the issue on March 22 under "City Manager's Report." A public notice in the "Delaware Gazette" (4/8) indicated that a public hearing on the matter would be held Mon., May 10. The notice did not mention any details of the future DORA, but specifics can be found in the May 10 agenda of City Council.

Penick Avenue Extension under Construction

Penick Ave. is currently being extended to Cobblestone Dr. Construction has started and will be completed soon. The project is part of the expansion of Schultz Elementary School and includes a new bus drop-off on the south side of the school. The new connector creates a more direct and shorter route to connect Delaware

Meadows and Sunnyview Farms and is a welcome addition. Neighborhood signs indicate that the Rockcreek and Cobblestone intersection will be closed for about 3 weeks, from May 17 through June 9, for road construction.



Demolition of City-Owned Spring Street Properties

It looks like the time has come for the city-owned properties at 7 and 27 Spring St. to be demolished. The City of Delaware acquired the buildings at a public auction last year for \$750,000 with the intention of redeveloping the site. The hope is to bring a hotel to downtown Delaware and improve the Spring St. corridor. In the meantime, the vacant lots would be used for additional public parking. The proposed demolition was brought to the attention of the Historic Preservation Commission on April 28. A formal request and staff report will occur on Wed., May 26 (6:30 pm). The two buildings in question – the former Auto Repair and NAPA stores – have little historic value, but at a past meeting HPC requested that any demolition be postponed until plans were firmly place to redevelop the properties. This time around, HPC has a different composition now and may be more inclined to approve the request. In addition, city representatives have stated that they are committed to bringing the property back into “productive use” and that the parking lot would only be a temporary arrangement.

Water Main Replacement at Griswold Street

The City of Delaware has announced a water-main replacement project along Griswold St. between Washington St. and Franklin St. Construction will begin May 17 and continue through June 4, weather permitting. There will be occasional street closures, and residents may experience short periods with no water service. Please direct questions to the Public Utilities Dept., 740-203-1904.

City Has Openings on Commissions, Committees & Boards

The City of Delaware has multiple openings on its various boards, committees, and commissions. Among them are the Board of Zoning Appeals / BZA (1st & 2nd Ward), the Airport Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission / HPC (2 openings), the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (2nd & 3rd Ward), the Planning Commission (3rd Ward & at-large), the Shade Tree Commission, the Income Tax Board of Review & the Records Commission. More info can be found on the City's website under “Boards, Commissions & Committees.” The application deadline is May 23, 2021 (5 pm).

Police Department Holds Session on Implicit Bias

On March 23, the Delaware community was invited by the Police Department to a public session on implicit bias with Darryl L. Rivers from the LEAD Company. The event was cosponsored by the Unity Community Center (SWCI), the Second Baptist Church, and One People. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the session was held on Zoom and streamed live via the police department's Facebook page. Rivers introduced himself as a Black man from Detroit, Michigan, who grew up in poverty and did not trust the authorities, incl. the police. He later joined the military and became a police officer himself, however. In other words, he is familiar with both sides of the divide and can serve as a bridge. When it comes to biases, Rivers said that all humans have them, whether we realize it or not. Sometimes instinct kicks in and we take a mental shortcut when faced with a perceived threat. We take mental shortcuts. He then focused on 4 forms of bias: 1. “Confirmation bias” reinforces what we already believe and ignores and rejects evidence to the contrary. 2. “Anchoring bias” relies on a particular piece of information that we have. Often it is the first set of data we receive. 3. “Choice supportive bias” favors your own sports team, tribe, race, ideology, or religion and is negatively inclined toward others. 4. “Bias by proxy” occurs when people report suspicious persons in their neighborhood to police. It is then the police officer who must investigate what may be a perfectly normal and harmless situation. In

all 4 cases, such biases narrows the perspective and may lead to bad decisions and outcomes. To achieve better understanding and higher thinking, we must recognize our biases and learn to overcome them through awareness and training.

Rivers repeatedly stated that he “a neutral individual” and not here “to take sides.” However, it was clear from his remarks that he feels that the police are doing an adequate job in the U.S. and sometimes unfairly maligned. An overwhelming percentage of police “contacts” with the public (3 to 3.5 million per day) are positive and peaceful. The 1,004 fatal police shootings in 2020 are atypical, he said. He voiced skepticism about civilian review boards and said that school resource officers (currently disallowed in Columbus) have a positive impact. He did not directly respond to questions concerning “police defunding,” but said to the extent that there are problems in the police force it is a “training issue,” not a personnel issue. Rivers did not address a question about police body cameras, but since this is the way police departments in Ohio and nationwide are going it can be surmised he is fine with them. Police unions are sometimes perceived as an obstacle to fairness, transparency, and change, but once again he deflected the question with vacuous generalities. He did not rule out “egregious” situations, but emphasized that each lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police has its own bylaws that it must follow. There were folks on Zoom and Facebook who have publicly questioned whether anti-bias training is really warranted. Darryl Rivers’ talk probably felt reassuring to them. However, it can be assumed that his presentation left people on the other side of the railroad track somewhat dissatisfied.

National Police Week & Peace Officers Memorial Day

On May 10, Mayor Carolyn Riggie issued a proclamation recognizing National Police Week and Peace Officers Memorial Day (Sat., May 15). DPD Chief Bruce Pijanowski accepted the proclamation and said in a short speech that the overwhelming majority of law enforcement officers in the nation act professionally. Riggie and Pijanowski stated that last year a total of 264 law-enforcement officers (LEOs) died in the line of duty. – Firearms-related fatalities claimed the lives of 48 officers (18.2%). 44 fatalities were traffic-related (16.6%). 172 officers (65.2%) died of other causes such as a result of heart attack or stroke. Of these, Covid-19 was responsible for 145 confirmed deaths (54.9%), the no. 1 cause.



Old Jail to Be Sold to Historical Society

The old jail at 20 W. Central Ave. will be sold to the DCHS Save Old Jail LLC for \$350,000. The group is legally independent from the Delaware County Historical Society. The decision to do so was made following an executive session of the Delaware County Land Bank on March 24. The Delaware County Board of Commissioners have stated their approval and said that ownership by the Historical Society was “a natural use for the building.” Planned uses include tours for visitors, exhibits, community meetings, and special events. Some office space will be rented out to help with expenses. This is the 6th historic building owned by the DCHS. Currently, there is the Nash House, the Cryder Research Library, the Meeker Homestead Museum, the Barn at Stratford, and the Millworker Cottage. – The historic jail was constructed in 1878 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

Ohio History Connection Intervenes

The current owner of 24-26 S. Sandusky St. wishes to demolish and replace the structure because the building is supposedly structurally “compromised” and “failing” and would be cost-prohibitive to rehabilitate. The building currently houses the Stash House tobacco shop and, until recently, the Ruthless Ink tattoo parlor. Other documents state that the structure is perfectly “intact” and that

rehabilitation would be similar in price. City staff has indicated that they are ready to go along with the plan. However, the majority of the members of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) have now twice balked at the idea of destroying a historic building in downtown Delaware. The destruction of historic substance is anathema to their mission to preserve national treasures and irreplaceable sites. They also worry about setting a precedent. HPC has never authorized the demolition of a downtown building, according to Chairperson Joe Coleman. At the HPC meeting on March 23 Coleman referred to a letter commissioners received from the Ohio History Connection. "Community Matters" has not seen the letter and readily admits that it is not fully informed. However, according to Coleman the Ohio History Connection noted that Delaware might lose the National Register of Historic Places designation as a "Historic District" if it went ahead with the demolition of 24-26 S. Sandusky St. Although the City says it does not take demolition lightly, it is obvious that it is way too trigger-happy when it comes to demolitions. Hopefully, that letter counts for something and will help strengthen HPC's position now and in the future.

Ralph A. Martin (1931-2021)

Delaware's cobbler for some 60 years, Ralph A. Martin, has died at the age of 90. He was born in Zanesville and came to Delaware in 1959. Two years later he purchased and established Ralph Martin Shoe Repair at 28 W. Winter St. A stroke in 2015 forced him to slow down a bit, but he worked at his shop until his full retirement in 2019, repairing shoes, purses, and leather products. Martin, a Black man, was a well-known, respected, and treasured member of the Delaware community. In 2016, Mayor Carolyn Riggle issued a public proclamation in his honor. Rev. Jon Powers, who has called Martin "a saint," officiated a celebration of his life on Mon., Apr. 26 at Robinson Funeral Home, 32 W. Winter St. Burial followed at Oak Grove Cemetery on S. Sandusky St.

Upcoming Events at SWCI / Unity Community Center

The Second Ward Community Initiative (SWCI) at 55 Ross St. has several events line up for the summer:

- Sat., June 19 – Juneteenth Festival (11 am – 2 pm). Location to be announced.
- Sat., June 19 – Pride Festival (3 pm) at SWCI.
- Sat., Aug. 21 – Unity Festival at SWCI. Time to be announced.
- Sat., Sept. 18 – Latin Festival at SWCI. Time to be announced.
- Sat., Oct. 23 – STEAM Youth Day at SWCI. Time to be announced.

We also heard that SWCI's community garden will remain at its current location for another year, next to the parking lot on near S. Liberty St. If interested in a garden plot, get in touch with the center.

SWCI / Unity Community Center May Get New Metal Roof

A public notice in the "Delaware Gazette" indicates that the Second Ward Community Initiative (SWCI) at 50 Ross St., also called Community Unity Center, may get a new metal roof soon. The estimated cost for the "Unity Community Center Roof Project" is \$135,000 and includes gutter and downspout replacement. Bids are due April 27 and must be submitted to the City of Delaware's Planning and Community Development Dept. The project is funded by federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The old roof is deteriorated and leaks, and animals have moved in. However, a similarly worded public notice was posted in Oct. 2020, and nothing came of it.

Little Free Library at SWCI / Community Unity Center

The latest addition to SWCI is a Little Free Library, located next to the entrance at 50 Ross St. The opening ceremony was May 8. The neighborhood book exchange encourages residents to leave books for others and take what they like. Adjacent to it is also a free outdoor food pantry where people can leave and take items as they see fit.



Theodora Higgenbotham

DAAHC Starts "Storytelling Series"

The Delaware African American Heritage Council is inviting the community to its "Sankofa Storytelling Series," which features stories relevant to the African-American experience – past, present, and future. The first narrator was local resident Theodora Collier Higgenbotham who spoke on Wed., April 21 via Facebook Live. She discussed the African-American experience and culture in Delaware, Ohio, where she grew up, went to school (Hayes), attended college (OWU), and lives to this day. The segregation experience was one of her focuses. Higgenbotham is a published Christian author (see amazon.com) and retired public-school teacher. To learn more about her, read her autobiography, entitled "This Little Pin Dot." For those unable to hear the talk, you can find it on the DAAHC's Facebook page. – "Sankofa" is an African word rich in symbolism. It translates as "to go back" or "to retrieve." The knowledge and wisdom of the past must never be forgotten.

DAAHC Offers Scholarships to Local Students

The Delaware African American Heritage Council (DAAHC), founded in 2018, is offering four inaugural \$500 scholarships for graduating Hayes High School or Delaware Area Career Center students who will study full-time at an accredited college, university, or technical school in Fall 2021. The required minimum gpa is 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. The scholarships were established to recognize "African American graduating seniors within Delaware City Schools who are seeking higher education." It is not a requirement to be a first-generation student. To learn more, visit bit.ly/daahcscholar.

Food Truck Depot under New Management

Food Truck Depot at 49 Potter St. has been leased by owner Paul Rockwell to Homestead Beer Company and will be renamed "Delaware Public House." Founded in 2013 by Adam Rhodes, Homestead Beer already owns and operates a brewery and beerhall in Heath (Licking County). The new Delaware Public House will continue to offer a variety of food options and also keep the adjacent volleyball sand pit. In addition, customers can purchase all kinds of beers – ales, lagers, wheat beer, stouts, porters, and more. In fact, beer enthusiasts will have the option of customizing their beers, according to CEO Joe Wilson. Wilson believes that Delaware's east side will continue to attract new businesses and redevelopment and one day will be "on par with the downtown area."

Fahey Bank Not Coming to Delaware

It appears that Fahey Bank is not opening a Delaware branch at its originally intended address at 75 W. William St. after all. A new sign indicates that the 0.83-acre property is now for sale "for commercial development." Perhaps the planned opening of the nearby First Citizens National Bank at 33 W. William St. gave the Marion-based bank pause, but newspaper reports over the last few years also indicate internal changes within the organization, incl. personnel turnover. – Time and again, precious trees get chopped down and historic buildings demolished in Delaware for naught when anticipated projects don't proceed for whatever reason. There ought to be stricter rules in place to ensure that demolition only takes place when (re-) development projects are firmly in place and fully funded.



Historic Rail Depot to Be Revitalized

RiverWest Partners (www.riverwestpartners.com), a Columbus developer, has purchased the former CSX railroad depot at 60 Lake St. at the corner of East Central Ave. and plans to rehabilitate and revitalize the building while preserving its historic character. The depot was constructed in 1885, but ceased to be used as a train station for passengers in 1950. It has seen a variety of uses since then, incl. by the Robinson's Flower Shop. Most recently, it has sat empty. As the brick building is in a state of slow deterioration, it will no doubt be expensive to rehab. The plan is to convert it into a mixed-use "community destination" that might include a restaurant with a patio and additional office space. The ground floor consists of 2,800 square feet. The location, at two major thoroughfares, is certainly ideal. If the plan moves forward, it would be yet another step in the revitalization of the city's long-neglected east side. The Depot could serve as a catalyst for further growth & development.

Whitesands Fined by OEPA

In 2019, there was some hullabaloo about Whitesands (also spelled White Sands), the mobile-home park at 341 Lake St. in Delaware. The Health Dept. and the Ohio EPA were involved and there rumors flying that the entire campground might be shut down by eminent domain. Apparently, there were concerns about public health and environmental contamination. Whitesands, which is outside the jurisdiction of the City of Delaware, is not connected to any public water and sewer system. "Community Matters" attempted to investigate the matter, but both the authorities and the owner, Gene A. Monte, declined to comment. (See "Community Matters," Sept. 2019.) It now turns out that Whitesands' troubles are not over. A public notice that appeared in the "Delaware Gazette" indicates that "White Sands," as the OEPA spells it, was issued a \$150 penalty "for failure to monitor drinking water for total coliform bacteria during November 2020."

Delaware County Republican Party Has New Headquarters

The Delaware County Republican Party (DCRP) has moved from 48 N. Sandusky St. to its new headquarters at 11 E. Central Ave., the former Blossom Stars Daycare. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Thurs., April 29. The 2-story structure offers more meeting space. Limited parking is available in front of and behind the building.

Big Lots Opens New Location

At the end of March, Big Lots moved into 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. The grand opening was April 24. The chain has a bit of everything: furniture, home décor, bath, garden, etc. It also offers a wide variety of foods and drinks, but a recent visit confirmed that Big Lots carries no fresh fruits and vegetables whatsoever. However, there is a small fridge with milk and some eggs. Hours are the same as at the old location on US 23 North: Mon. – Sat., 9 am – 9 pm and Sun. 10 am – 9 pm. Please wear a mask while Ohio's health orders are in effect.

J. Gumbo May Move to New Location

J. Gumbo, the popular Cajun food restaurant at 9 N. Sandusky St., may soon move to the site of the former Amanda Plumbing business at 39 E. William St., at the corner of N. Union St. Owner Richard Upton has spoken to customers of his plan, but "Community Matters" has so far not been able to confirm the news. One of the advantages of the site would be the possibility of more patio seating and/or parking space. The restaurant would sit at a major thoroughfare and across from two churches and Main Street Delaware's new Welcome Center at 20 E. William St.

Miller's Country Gardens Now Open

Miller's Country Gardens at 2488 State Rt. 37 West opened for the season Mon., April 5. Customers are asked to wear masks inside buildings, and capacity may be capped. To learn more, visit www.millerscountrygardens.com.

Alpha Group Has Potential Plans for a Bulk Store

The May newsletter of the Delaware Area Chamber of Commerce reports: "The Alpha Group has potential plans for a

refillable / bulk store in Delaware County. A refillable store allows you to bring in your own containers (or purchase one at the shop) and fill it with household goods (shampoo, laundry detergent, cleaning spray, and more). When your containers are empty, bring them back to the store to refill them. This is an easy way to reduce plastic waste in your home. To assist with planning, we encourage you to answer the questions below. The first 500 people to complete the survey will receive a complimentary cup of coffee and donut from Tim Horton's. Click here to take the survey." – The link to the survey is on p. 3 of the online newsletter. Food items don't seem to be part of the program, although the survey asks about "dietary requirements." Mentioned specifically are lotion, shampoo, conditioner, hand soap, detergent, cleaning spray & fabric softener.

Central Ohio Symphony

The Central Ohio Symphony is currently making plans for the 2021/22 season, its 43rd. In a press release, Executive Director Warren W. Hyer announced that the Symphony has received another NEA grant to perform contemporary works that have premiered elsewhere. The "Play It Again" initiative will allow the orchestra to perform more works by living composers. Another focus in 2021/22 is the inclusion of composers and guest artists from underrepresented populations. As plans begin to be finalized, more information about upcoming performances can be found on the Symphony's webpage at www.centralohiosymphony.org and/or its Facebook page. At both sites, you will also find free recordings from previous years.



OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY & HIGHER EDUCATION

OWU Announces In-Person Commencement

Ohio Wesleyan has announced that it will celebrate Commencement for the Classes of 2020 and 2021 in-person on Sat., May 29, starting at 10 am. The event(s) will be held in Selby Stadium on Henry St., which can accommodate more guests while maintaining social distancing. Masks will also be required. Students will be able to bring up to 4 guests, based on the current health and safety guidelines. Any additional activities such as brunches or receptions are canceled. Baccalaureate for the Class of 2021 will be a virtual experience. The event will be livestreamed on the OWU website for those unable to attend in person. For updates, check www.owu.edu/commencement.

OWU Prepares for 2021/22 School Year

OWU is preparing for a return to fully on-campus and in-person instruction in 2021/22, pending CDC guidelines. Its "residential mission," President Rock Jones explained in a recent memo, is "grounded in the experience of students being in classrooms, laboratories, studios, residence halls and other co-curricular venues." Plans are to return to the traditional calendar in place before Covid. The fall 2021 semester is scheduled to run from Aug. 25 (first day of classes) through Dec. 10 (last day of classes). OWU expects an incoming class of about 400 new students, fewer than expected and budgeted for. Although funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) help, they don't resolve the long-term structural deficit of the university.

OWU Hires Six New Faculty Members

Six new faculty members will join OWU in Fall 2021. Out of a total of 11 searches to fill critical vacancies, 6 were successful. The new cohort will be a diverse group as OWU – for the first time – has made a concerted effort to hire more Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Here are the names of the six new assistant professors, in alphabetical order:

Will C. Georgic, Economics & Business, Ph.D. OSU. His scholarly expertise is in agricultural and environmental economics, with a special focus on problems related to climate change;

Brian Granger, Performing Arts (Theater), Ph.D., Univ. of Calif.-Santa Barbara. Granger is a playwright, songwriter & actor with a focus on indigenous peoples and Africana musicals;

Bona Kang, Education, Ph.D. Univ. of Calif.-Berkeley. Kang, of Asian-American descent, works in the field of Elementary Education, esp. in the STEM areas;

Cortney Knipp (formerly Cortney McEniry), Performing Arts (Theater), MFA Univ. of Texas at Austin. Knipp is an experienced theater practitioner and the artistic director of UVA Acts (Univ. of Virginia).

Antron Mahoney, Africana, Gender & Identity Studies, Ph.D. Univ. of Louisville. Mahoney is an inter-disciplinary scholar who explores race, gender, and sexuality theories & politics, esp. relating the Black experience.

Alejandra Rojas Silva, Fine Arts, Ph.D. Harvard Univ. Rojas Silva is a Latin-American art historian with a special interest in indigenous experiences and identities during the era of colonialism.

OWU Receives \$830,000 Grant for STEM Education

OWU has received a 5-year, \$830,466 grant from the Ohio Dept. of Education to fund scholarships for Ohio students pursuing degrees in the STEM sciences (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The State of Ohio has a lesser interest in supporting the Social Sciences, Humanities, and the Arts, it seems. OWU will begin awarding the Choose Ohio First (COF) grants this fall. The university was one of 57 Ohio colleges and universities earning COF grants this year. Over the years, the COF program has supported thousands of college students. (Visit www.ohiohighered.org/cof to learn more about the grant program.)

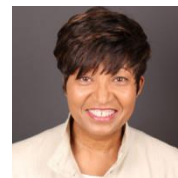
OWU Lowers Entrance Standards

What are the entrance requirements at Ohio Wesleyan? Formerly, according to OWU's website (accessed 3/19/21), *"the Admission Committee has determined that a college preparatory course of study in high school will best prepare students for academic success at OWU. Minimum requirements include 4 years of English, 3 years of social science, 3 years of math and science, and 2 years of foreign language study (3 years recommended)." The school, which is experiencing an enrollment crisis, has now decided that these standards are too high and a barrier for admission. The faculty as a whole was not consulted. There will be no more the foreign-language requirement in the future, but two years are "recommended."* Discussions also involve changes to other entrance requirements as well as graduation requirements. Some faculty are concerned about the inexorable dilution and deterioration of academic standards while others point out the need to recruit and retain additional students in uncertain times and to make the school more accessible to non-white students.

OWU Is "Cutting Languages Left and Right"

As an OWU history professor recently stated, the university "is cutting languages left and right." The Dept. of Modern Foreign Languages, now called Dept. of World Languages and Cultures, used to offer a dozen world languages, but gradually one after another disappeared: Arabic, Chinese, Greek, and Russian. There was debate whether or not to continue the teaching of Latin on the first-year level. Recently, the German major was discontinued and a vacant position in French was not filled. Basque, Hebrew, Old Norse, Quechua, Romani, Romanian, Sanskrit, and Yiddish were once offered by knowledgeable faculty on an individualized basis. At the going rate, only Spanish will be left in a few years. The trend is clear. The institution is moving away from the humanities and the liberal arts and gravitating closer to utilitarian professional and pre-professional degrees and other career-focused programs. The area of economics, business, management, and entrepreneurship is the most popular course of study because that's where the money is. Searching for truth (ethics) and beauty (aesthetics) has become an empty platitude. The closing of the American mind and disappearance of diversity is not a phenomenon unique to OWU. Anti-intellectualism, financial expediency, and corporization are nationwide trends that have been going on for years. Budget pressures require a sustained focus on

revenue-generating programs, to the detriment of other disciplines. In addition, Ohio is a land-locked state with few international connections. The demand and the opportunity for a truly eye-opening and transformational liberal-arts experience is limited. It did not help that Covid-19 stopped all study-abroad opportunities. And during the Trump administration, "America first" was the national mantra. The end result is myopia and entropy, not a liberal-arts education. Americans were "tongue-tied" 40 years when Sen. Paul Simon wrote his eponymous book, and the situation is getting worse. Small wonder then that these days few students think in terms of "human spirit," "searching for truth," "moral imperatives," and "global citizenship." Intellectual curiosity for its own sake is rare.



OWU Has New Director of Human Resources

OWU has a new director of Human Resources – Imogene G. Johnson, an 1980 graduate of Ohio Wesleyan. She begins her new role on June 1 and will be responsible for planning, developing, and implementing programs to attract, develop, retain, and advance talented administrative and support staff. She will also collaborate with members of OWU's DEI council to advance the institution's goals on the area of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. Johnson has more than 20 years of experience in HR management, having worked for the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio Rural Electric Cooperation, Buckeye Power, and Cardinal Operating. In Aug. 2018, she founded her own company, Strategically Driven HR Consulting LLC based in Dublin, Ohio. Johnson resides in Dublin and is married to Darold Johnson, also a 1980 OWU graduate, who serves as the director of legislation for the Ohio Federation of Teachers. – Imogene Johnson replaces Scott Simon who was with OWU from 2016 through 2020.

Student Creates Video of Prof. Sean Kay

OWU student Anna Edmiston '23 has created a memorial video that celebrates the late Prof. of Politics and Government, Dr. Sean Kay (1967-2020), who unexpectedly died last fall. (See our obit in "Community Matters," January 2021.) The documentary was unveiled in a special online Zoom ceremony hosted by Interim Chaplain Chad Johns on April 8, attended by 45 people. The 25-minute video includes interviews with five faculty members who shared Elliott Hall with him as well as five students who took courses with him. All praised his passion and commitment, his many interests and broad knowledge, and his interpersonal skills and love for his family. Sean Kay was a political science expert and a scholar of international relations, a lover of all things Irish and talented singer / guitarist, and – later in life – a kayaker and, like his father before him, a "river keeper." The video includes many pictures of Sean Kay and ends with a goofy, unforgettable dance he performed for his students on Zoom.

Marching Band Update

OWU Band director Mary Kate McNally is leaving OWU at the end of the academic year to be closer to her family in Colorado. After her arrival in Aug. 2017, she quickly became an influential and respected voice at OWU. She was also a strong advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion within the broader band community. It is disappointing to see her leave. However, the marching band will continue to be in good hands. Music professor Richard ("Rich") D. Edwards, Ph.D., has agreed to take over the responsibility. He has developed a plan for significant growth in the size of the Marching Band, designed to attract more students to OWU. Dr. Edwards has decades of experience leading and conducting orchestras, choirs, and ensembles, incl. marching bands. At one point, he taught marching-band techniques at Ithaca College and the Univ. of North Carolina at Greensboro. With this change, Marching Band will become a component of the newly created Performing Arts Dept. at OWU. –

Residents have the opportunity to hear OWU's Marching Band practice at the Boardman Arts Park on Wed., May 19 (7-8 pm).

www.owu.edu/stream

If you go to www.owu.edu/stream, you will find an amazing archive of recorded concerts, recitals, dance performances, plays, lectures, sports events, and more of not just the 2020/21 academic year but also of previous years. It's even better than Netflix because there is no charge: everything you hear and see is free. While most people prefer to attend such events in person, it is good to have the option of viewing things online during Covid-19. Although this is a tremendous public service that OWU offers, the archive is not well-known off-campus.

Incidents of Racism and Vandalism on the OWU Campus

There is much anxiety and anger, pain and frustration among students on this and other campuses these days. Time and again, President Jones must inform students, faculty, and staff of another incident of vandalism, destruction, and racism that has occurred at OWU. Sometimes, the perpetrators are outsiders. But at other times the people responsible appear to be OWU students themselves. The latest memorandum by Dr. Jones mentions a general "increase in vandalism and destructive behavior in some of our residence halls." Most recently, a custodial worker reported finding "a wall defaced with messages and counter-messages that included racist symbolism, anger, divisiveness, and frustration with the current political and social climate." Every time this happens, President Jones urges the campus community to move beyond such base profanity and propaganda. Messages of hate and racism are not acceptable and cannot be tolerated, he has repeatedly said. – He is right, of course. However, it is a difficult task to call for more civility and tolerance in a society where anti-Black, anti-foreigner, anti-LGBTQ, anti-intellectual, and anti-democratic hatred and propaganda have become normalized over the past years. Also, Jones' evocation of OWU's proud liberal-arts tradition rings increasingly hollow at a time when economic realpolitik necessitates brutal budget cuts and a complete re-engineering of the institution, undermining and devaluing its historic mission. There is disruption and destruction coming not only from the bottom but also from the top. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Students Workers at Kenyon College on Strike

Student workers at Kenyon College in Gambier, incl. student employees at libraries and athletic facilities, went on a 1-day strike. The work stoppage came after Kenyon's Board of Trustees rejected the demands of the Kenyon Students Workers Organizing Committee. K-SWOC is seeking several reforms. On their wish list are higher wages, greater decision-making abilities, anti-harassment policies, and increased job accessibility & stability during Covid-19. – Student workers play an indispensable role on college campuses, but during the pandemic-related lockdowns many lost their job and income and ended up struggling. The strike in Gambier is said to have been the first undergraduate labor strike in the country.

Athens University President Resigns

Ohio University's President M. Duane Nellis will resign from his post at the end of the academic year, two years before his contract expires. His tenure was one fraught with declining student enrollment and budget issues. In May 2020, he announced major personnel reduction efforts, eliminated 140 union positions, cut an additional 200 employees, and implemented furloughs for faculty members. At the time, the OU Faculty Senate voted 44-11 to approve a vote of "no confidence" in Nellis and his VP for Finance. In Fall 2020, only 3,126 fresh(women) enrolled, the smallest class in decades. – The university will name an interim president in the coming days and launch a national search soon.

Urbana University for Sale

Are you in the market for a college? Urbana Univ. in Urbana, OH is for sale. The historic property includes 115 acres and 22 buildings. The campus is listed by CBRE without a price, but the Champaign County auditor values it at \$12.7 million. Franklin Univ. in Columbus acquired the school in 2014 and ran it as a division of Franklin, but the acquisition proved unsustainable. It was closed for good in 2020. Franklin Univ. prefers to sell the campus in its entirety,

but is open to splitting it up into smaller parcels. Depending on the end user, some of the buildings and facilities may be demolished. Possible uses include another school, a corporate retreat, or senior living. Residential developers have also expressed strong interest.

BGSU Student Stone Foltz Died of Alcohol Poisoning

Lucas Co. Coroner Diane Scala-Barnett has determined that BGSU sophomore Stone Foltz died of alcohol intoxication, aka alcohol poisoning. His blood-alcohol level was .394, nearly five times the legal limit, and might have been even higher immediately after the hazing ritual he experienced. Foltz, 20, graduated from Buckeye Valley High School in Delaware in 2019 and died in March after he was forced to drink a copious amount of hard liquor as a new Pi Kappa Alpha (PIKE) pledge. BGSU also criticized the "deep culture of deception" and lack of cooperation in the organization and has since permanently banned the fraternity: "The fraternity will never again be recognized at BGSU in the future." Rex Elliott, the family's lawyer, said in a statement, "It is our view that every university in the state of Ohio immediately shut down fraternities until they demonstrate they can be positive influences on campus and stop hazing." Eight of Stoltz' fraternity brothers have now been indicted on a wide range of charges. The group includes Jacob Krinn, 20, of Delaware who is charged with first-degree felony involuntary manslaughter, reckless homicide, felonious assault, hazing, failure to comply with underage alcohol laws, and obstructing official business.

On paper, colleges and universities as well as the parent organizations of the fraternities (incl. Pi Kappa Alpha International) have tough-sounding anti-alcohol and zero-hazing policies to legally cover their backside, but the sad and undeniable reality is that vast amounts of alcohol are being consumed on and off most campuses. Banning all Greek life, as some institutions of higher learning have done, would be a step in the right direction, but it alone would not stop the ongoing alcohol abuse. Legislation is now pending on the state and national level that would force colleges and universities to report hazing incidents as part of their annual crime reports and require them to establish campus-wide educational programs. Greater transparency and accountability are needed.

University of Akron Fires 96 Professors: A Case Study

In 2020, the Univ. of Akron eliminated 178 positions, including the jobs of 96 unionized professors. One of them was tenured physics professor Dr. Susan E. Ramlo who had just finished her 26th year at the institution. Neither her awards nor her publications and strong evaluations protected her. The indignities did not stop there, writes the "Chronicle of Higher Education" (4/30). She soon discovered that she no longer had library privileges and university email. She also lost her health insurance when the university declared "force majeure" (exigency), which nullified all prior contractual agreements. The university contended that Covid-19 met the threshold for unforeseen and catastrophic circumstances. The tuition discount for her son also disappeared. The social, financial, and emotional toll on Ramlo was painful: "We were discarded. We are all trash. We are not worth anything to the university, no matter how much blood, sweat, and tears we put in." – Unfortunately, this is the ugly reality of not only part-timers and adjuncts, but also of tenured professors with seniority. Like many corporations, institutions of higher education often talk in positive terms such as "family" and "community," but those in the industry know better. It is nothing but a blatant lie. The only thing that matters is the bottom line. Dr. Ramlo is now a self-employed independent researcher and consultant, according to her LinkedIn account.

Walsh University Cancels Visit by Gay Emcee

Walsh Univ. is a Catholic university in North Canton, Ohio that enrolls more than 2,500 students. The current president is Dr. Tim Collins. As part of a popular student-talent competition to take place March 26, the Mr. Walsh event, gay actor and comedian Daniel Franzese was invited to serve as host. (The name Walsh refers to Bishop Emmett Michael Walsh of Youngstown.) However, university administrators have since rescinded the invitation. Franzese says it is because of his sexual orientation. He considers himself a victim of the Vatican's March 15 statement that Catholic clergy are banned from blessing same-sex marriages. In a statement he said, "I truly believe it is the microaggressions and injustices against minorities that cause

hate crimes like Pulse Orlando and the horrific events of the other day.” (He was referring to the shooting of 10 people in Boulder, Colorado, on March 23.) Walsh Univ. has denied Franzese’s claims.

Temple University Indicated in Rankings Scandal

The former dean of Temple University’s Fox School of Business, Moshe Porat, has been charged with conspiracy, wire fraud, and falsifying data to boost the school’s rankings in the U.S. News and World Report. His phony information about student test scores, work experience, and other data helped the MBA program to quadruple its enrollment and revenues. After the scandal broke, Porat was removed from the rankings and the business school enrollment plummeted. There don’t seem to be any negative consequences for Temple Univ., which benefitted financially from the scheme of its former dean and may have been a willing accomplice. The incident raises the question how many other colleges and universities submit falsified or fabricated data about their performance. There is little transparency in higher education, and nothing is easier than to create or manipulate data to meet certain desired benchmarks.

Linfield University Fires Whistleblower

Linfield Univ. in Oregon, a small Baptist college, has accused Dr. Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, a tenured professor of English and Shakespeare scholar, of “insubordination” and fired him. There was no due process, according to Pollack-Pelzner. The action came amid a years-long internal turmoil involving the president of Linfield, Dr. Miles K. Davis, and the Board of Trustees chairman, David Baca. There were accusations of sexual misconduct and racism, a federal lawsuit, and a vote of no confidence. One trustee, David Jubb, resigned in 2019 after being charged with several counts of sexual misconduct involving students. The NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Oregon Board of Rabbis became involved. They have all urged the president to step down. Pollack-Pelzner was speaking in his capacity as a faculty trustee and served as a voice for his colleagues and students when he outlined multiple accusations of sexual misconduct by university leaders and trustees. The president condemned the “misinformation” and said it was an attack on his “Black leadership.” Pollack-Pelzner, who is Jewish, has in turn stated that both Davis and Baca have made numerous Anti-Semitic remarks over the years.

Millions of Student Cannot Get Transcripts and Graduate

Nationwide, 6.6 million students cannot obtain their transcripts and transfer or graduate from colleges and universities if they have not paid their bills in full. The money in question is not just for tuition, room, and board. It can also be for activity and graduation fees, parking tickets, library fines, late charges, and so on. In many cases, penalties and interest are added on, increasing the original amount. It is standard practice for schools to withhold transcripts and diplomas for unpaid balances in any amount, sometimes for as little as \$25. Low-income students and students of color are disproportionately impacted. In many cases, the practice of “transcript ransom” prevents them from getting a job or moving on to graduate school. Without a job, students cannot repay their debt, so the whole thing becomes a vicious catch-22 trap. This is a far cry from the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) that schools brag about these days. Some states are now considering new laws to help these students or have already passed them. California last year became the first state in which public and private schools are banned from withholding the transcripts of students with unpaid debt. A Washington State law requires that students who owe money be allowed to get their transcript and the grades they have acquired. A similar bill in Massachusetts would give students ownership of their transcripts, though not their degrees, if they still owe money. Some legislators are calling the withholding of transcripts from students “a predatory system.” It is clear that colleges and universities can and must do better.

University of Southern California Settles Sex-Abuse Lawsuit

The University of Southern California has agreed to an \$852 million settlement with more than 700 women who were sexually abused by campus gynecologist Dr. George Tyndall. Combined with an earlier settlement worth \$215 million, USC’s payout amounts to more than \$1.1 billion. It is believed to be a record amount for such a

lawsuit. It is double the size of the compensation won by victims of Dr. Lawrence G. Nassar, the Michigan State Univ. physician. Hundreds of women have accused Tyndall of sexual abuse while they were his patients, but in many cases the allegations were outside the 10-year statute of limitations or there was insufficient evidence to criminally prosecute. However, Tyndall still faces 35 criminal counts of alleged sexual misconduct between 2009 and 2016 and up to 64 years in prison if convicted. The scale of the settlement is an abject admission that the university failed a generation of female students. USC President Carol L. Folt apologized for the pain and suffering the USC community has experienced and expressed her hope that the resolution would provide some relief to Tyndall’s victims. The settlement will be funded over 2 years through a combination of litigation reserves, deferred capital spending, sale of nonessential assets, and careful management of nonessential expenses. Folt added that no tuition money, endowment funds, or philanthropic gifts would be used to pay the costs. Ultimately, however, it is always the taxpayers, consumers, or, in this case, the students, who foot the bill when institutions, agencies, or companies commit misconduct and settle lawsuits. In the meantime, Tyndall, 74, is free on bond. He has denied any wrongdoing and has pleaded not guilty to the 35 counts of criminal sexual misconduct.

University of Michigan Ignored Warnings about Sexual Predator

For decades, the Univ. of Michigan ignored warnings about Dr. Robert E. Anderson, a doctor in the athletic department until 1999. He retired from the institution in 2003 and died in 2008. During his 37 years at UM, he sexually assaulted countless male students, incl. members of the football and wrestling teams. He typically subjected them to unwarranted rectal and groin exams and/or fondled them to the point of ejaculation. A new university-commissioned report, based on hundreds of interviews with former student-athletes along with former staff and administrators, concludes that complaints and cries for help were overlooked and ignored by staff and university officials, among them the former assistant vice president of student services, Thomas Easthope, and a former wrestling coach, Bill Johannesen.

University of South Carolina President Resigns

The president of the University of South Carolina, retired Army Lt. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, resigned after he delivered a speech during commencement that was lifted nearly word-for-word from a famous commencement speech by Adm. William H. McRaven, given in 2014, that had been viewed by more than 13 million on YouTube. He also addressed the new graduates as “the newest alumni from the University of California” instead of the University of South Carolina. But it was Caslen’s plagiarism that did him in. In academia, plagiarism is an absolute no-no, tantamount to committing a felony. The university board of trustees initially refused to accept the resignation, but ultimately accepted it once the news had spread widely and reached the South Carolina Statehouse. Caslen’s tenure as university president was controversial from the beginning. Many faculty and students opposed his appointment, saying he lacked qualifications. The faculty senate unanimously approved a no-confidence vote soon after he started. In addition, the school faced criticism about mishandling sexual-harassment complaints and lost donors. – Former President Harris Pastides will serve as interim leader while the board is launching a new search.

Law School Dean at CUNY Retires

Many universities (as well as agencies, institutions, companies, and other entities) talk a good game when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). But the reality is often very different. A case in point is Mary Lu Bilek, the dean of the law school at the City University of New York (CUNY). Bilek is a liberal person who has promoted social justice, and her school has a high percentage of faculty members who are people of color. Still, vestiges of racism remain. In 2020, Dean Bilek pushed to give early tenure to a young white woman, Allie Robbins, who was about to become an administrator (associate dean). Robbins had 5 years to go before she was up for tenure. In the meantime, other well-qualified senior colleagues of color, further along on the tenure track, were not up for consideration. They had been told that early tenure was not possible.

The plan did not go over well. What do you call it when white people get fast-tracked and well-qualified BIPOC people get left behind? It is a manifestation of systemic racism. Many faculty members denounced Bilek's insensitive conduct, calling it hypocritical. She had presented herself and CUNY as "anti-racist," they wrote in a letter, while ignoring that her own decision perpetuated "institutional racism." Needless to say, the conflict was carefully concealed from the public, incl. CUNY students. Once they found out about it, however, students immediately called for Bilek's resignation and started a petition. Graduating students also asked that her name not appear on their diplomas in May. Dean Bilek has since issued an apology and agreed to retire at the end of the academic year, if not earlier.

"Wonderworks" explores the Power of Literature

OSU English professor Angus Fletcher has published a new book, "Wonderworks: The 25 Most Powerful Inventions in the History of Literature" (Simon & Schuster 2021, 464 pp., \$30). Innovations take place not only in the STEM sciences, he says, but also in the arts and humanities. Literature, in particular, can encourage empathy, alleviate trauma, help with grieving, build courage, help overcome fear, increase problem-solving, boost creativity & imagination, overcome loneliness, and more. Literary devices are just as vital for improving the lives of humans as advances in science, he says. "Wonderworks" focuses on 25 narratives – from Homer to film, music & television – and is both easy to read and inspirational. Fletcher is a core faculty member at OWU's "Project Narrative" that studies storytelling and how it works. His book proves that literature matters and that human existence would be poorer without it.

Too Many Students Are "Priced Out"

The conservative National Association of Scholars (www.nas.org) has published a lengthy report by Neetu Arnold, "Priced Out: What College Costs America." The author (a "she") notes that an undergraduate degree has become prohibitively expensive for many young Americans. Collectively, some 44 million Americans now owe more than \$1.5 trillion in student debt, which delays marriage, family, career, and homeownership for countless people to the detriment of society. Arnold accuses colleges and universities to recruit and financially exploit the very groups – the poor, ethnic minorities, and first-generation students – that they purport to champion in the name of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). A disproportionate number of these disadvantaged students never graduate, leaving them saddled with an enormous amount of debt but limited career options. "Priced Out" concludes with 14 recommendations to refocus higher education. Liberals may not agree with some of them (for example, the conservative report seems to advocate the reduction of removal of "student wellness" as a university goal), but it is obvious for those on the right and the left that higher education in the U.S. is in a deep existential crisis.

Higher Education a Priority for the Biden Administration

In the knowledge industry of the 21st century, a K-12 education and a high-school diploma is no longer enough. The Biden Administration recognizes this and has plans to expand K-12 on both ends. The president is proposing universal free preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, which helps level the playing field for people of color. It is also a way to incentivize parents to return to work. On the other end, Biden is also proposing two years of free community college for young adults. The president's proposal includes additional funding for historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU's) and institutions that serve Native Americans as well as an \$85 billion investment in Pell grants. Progressives such as Bernie Sanders have long called for four years of free tuition, as is the case in Europe, but the U.S. is not yet at this point. It may take another generation to accomplish this goal, but it is commendable that Biden, unlike his predecessor, realizes the critical and indispensable value of education for the economy, the STEM sciences, the military, and so on. Many nations have educational systems that are superior. Unless the U.S. pivots, it will be left behind.

Rich Cordray to Oversee Federal Student Aid

Richard Cordray, the former head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), was tapped by the Biden Administration to oversee Federal Student Aid, a \$1.5 trillion portfolio. Cordray, 62, has

a strong track record as a public servant. At one point, he was Ohio's state attorney general and treasurer. In 2018, he unsuccessfully ran against Mike DeWine, Ohio's current governor. In his new position, Cordray will be responsible for managing the student financial assistance programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, incl. grants, loans, and work-study. Elizabeth Warren praised Biden's choice: "I'm very glad he'll be protecting student borrowers and bringing much-needed accountability to the federal student loan program." Progressives have been pushing the Biden Administration to cancel the \$1.7 trillion student-loan debt that is holding the nation and its young people back.

DELAWARE COUNTY & CENTRAL OHIO

SourcePoint Once Again Offers Farmers Market Vouchers

SourcePoint is once again offering its farmer's market voucher program for up to 1,150 individuals with \$60 vouchers, or \$69,000 in total. Eligible individuals must be Delaware County residents ages 55 or older and be below 200% of the federal poverty level. Residents of nursing homes or facilities where meals are provided are not eligible. Food items include fresh vegetables, fruits, and berries as well as honey and herbs. Live vegetable and herb plants are also covered by the program. Vouchers will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis on Fri., May 21 (2-6 pm) and Sat., May 22 (9 am - 12 pm) at 800 Cheshire Rd. south of Delaware. Last year's voucher participants will receive applications in the mail in May. New participants can find application on site during the distribution hours forms or at www.mysourcepoint.org/farmers-market. Mail-in applications are not accepted.

Delaware Area Career Center Hires New Superintendent

The long-time superintendent of the Delaware Area Career Center (DACC), Mary Beth Freeman, is retiring. Jay Poroda will replace her beginning in June. He has worked in public education for 26 years and is currently the assistant superintendent at Tolles Career & Technical Center in Madison County. Poroda joins the district on June 1. His formal contract begins Aug. 1, 2021.

Polaris Fashion Place Close to Bankruptcy

Polaris Fashion Mall, owned by Washington Prime Group, appears close to bankruptcy. Rent revenue fell from \$633.6 million in 2019 to \$506.7 million in 2020 as many retailers did not pay full rent, closed down, or declared bankruptcy. For all of 2020, the company lost \$233.8 million, compared with a total loss of \$11 million in 2019. In February 2021, Washington Prime missed a \$23.2 million interest payment. Ongoing discussions with lenders include the option of Chapter 11 bankruptcy, the company revealed. Several other mall systems have also filed for Chapter 11. Washington Prime operates a total of 100 shopping centers in the western part of the U.S. and a total of 9 in Ohio. Its stock has fallen from almost \$15 a share in January to \$2.74 a share. The two recent shootings at Polaris Fashion Mall, which forced the temporary evacuation of the facility, did not help the situation.

ODOT to Spend \$6 Million on Improvements to I-71

The Ohio Dept. of Transportation (ODOT) plans to spend a total of almost \$2 billion on 956 projects statewide this year. Among the projects announced on April 7 is the widening of the southbound lanes of I-71 between Gemini Place and the I-270 intersection. More than 160,000 vehicles travel through that section of the highway every day, and interchanges are often congested during peak hours. – Farther south in downtown Columbus, the intersection of I-71 and I-70 will be entirely revamped and relocated, which is a \$1.4 billion mega-project that will take years to complete.

Midway Market Expands, Opens May

The family-owned Midway Market at 8208 Marysville Rd. (Route 36 West) in Ostrander has been busy building a new and larger structure behind the current one. A Facebook page notification said the convenience store hopes to open soon. Moving week is May 15-20; the store will be closed during that time. The popular

convenience store offers fuel (Shell), groceries, seasonal vegetables and fruit, pizza, subs, salads, deli products, and ice cream.



Two Die at Delaware Dam

Two young people died on March 30 at the Delaware Dam. A group of fishing teenagers had fallen into the cold water at the bottom of the dam when 20-year-old Melvin G. Salvador jumped into the Olentangy to help them. Two of the teens were able to come out of the water on their own, but Salvador and Westerville Central High School student Nabin Bhandari, 17, were submerged in the cold water for about 45 minutes and died at OhioHealth Grady Memorial Hospital. The school extended its condolences to the families of the two dead people.

Who Is Melvin Guerra Salvador?

Melvin Guerra Salvador who died on March 30 has been called "a good Samaritan" by the Delaware County Sheriff's Office after he jumped almost immediately into the frigid water to help rescue three teens. It was a heroic selfless act that cost the 20-year-old Columbus man his life. Who was he? "Community Matters" has attempted to find out more about him, but newspapers and social media have so far been no help. There is no obituary yet, and there may never be one. A fundraiser for his funeral has been set up at GoFundMe that has so far generated over \$7,000, but organizer Jovanny Guerra did not include any biographical details other than a picture. The name form used at GoFundMe is Melvin Salvador Guerra, by the way. He seems to come from a Spanish-speaking family of Latin-American descent and was perhaps a member of the immigrant community. Immigrants and refugees are routinely demonized, so calling him "a good Samaritan" is appropriate because the biblical Samaritans were equally despised. The brave act of Melvin Guerra Salvador (or Salvador Guerra) should be widely honored, perhaps even with a resolution by the County Commissioners or City Council.



Stratford Ecological Center Featured in "Columbus Dispatch"

Stratford Ecological Center, a working farm and education center at 3083 Liberty Rd. that also includes a wooded state nature preserve, was featured in the "Columbus Dispatch" on April 4. Nature writer Jim McCormac discusses the origin story of Stratford in his article and mentions the rich fauna and flora of the 236-acre property, calling it "an oasis of biodiversity." He recently was part of a group that visited the annual spring migration of frogs and salamanders to Stratford's vernal pools. He highly recommends a visit to Stratford. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic guests should check the website first, www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org. "Community Matters," in turn, highly recommends visiting the naturalist's extensive blog at www.jimmccormac.blogspot.com. Entries are listed alphabetically.

News from the ECO Center in Caledonia

The ECO Center at 1757 County Rd. 59 east of Caledonia (Marion County) seems to be going strong. It celebrated Earth Day on Sat., April 24. Activities for children and adults included nature lessons, a scavenger hunt, farm animals, a rain-barrel raffle, a barrel

train, and much more. – The ECO Center also offers week-long summer camps for children between the ages 6 and 14. The day camps run weekdays from 9 am to 4 pm. Activities include age-appropriate lessons, nature exploration, farm & gardening chores, arts & crafts, and more. Some sponsorships are available for kids with financial limitations and/or lack of access to outdoor experiences. Visit www.ecocenterohio.com for a photo gallery and more info. Emily Ollervides is the director of the camp (info@ecocenterohio.com).

Black Sludge Spills at Renergy

According to the Morrow County Sentinel, on April 17 there was a spill at Emerald Bioenergy (Renergy) in Westfield Township north of Delaware. After a hose came apart at the facility, an unknown quantity of black sludge entered the Whetstone River, a tributary to the Olentangy River and Delaware Lake. Apparently it was not the first such spill. ODNR and OEPA were notified and are investigating. Emerald Bioenergy (Renergy) is an anaerobic biodigester that diverts organic agricultural, municipal, and food waste from landfills and produces renewable energy (methane) and fertilizer. While the idea sounds good in theory, Renergy is not exactly the "green energy company" it proclaims to be on its website. Over the years residents have been upset about the putrid manure and sewage odor that frequently emanates from the facility and makes people sick. And there are other problems, as documented by "Community Matters" in the past after touring the Morrow County facility. A sister facility in the Dayton area, Dovetail, is equally loathed and is currently experiencing litigation. Emerald Bioenergy (Renergy) is taxed as a public utility in Morrow County and thus not subject to ordinary zoning laws. However, an appeal is pending.

Columbus Police Department "Runs Amok"

Chief U.S. District Judge Algenon L. Marbley granted a preliminary injunction against the Columbus Police Dept. (CPD) that bars officers from using tear gas, pepper spray, wooden bullets, and other "non-lethal force" against peaceful and lawful demonstrators. In 2020, officers of the CPD indiscriminately brutalized non-violent protesters, inflicted unwarranted pain and punishment on them, and used extensive non-lethal force when demonstrators rallied to express their outrage against the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. More than 800 complaints were filed, but only one allegation resulted in "discipline." That officer was ordered to receive "counseling" for not filing the proper paperwork. To date, zero charges have been filed.

Danny O'Connor Plans to Run for House of Representatives

Franklin County Recorder Danny O'Connor, 34, will not seek Rob Portman's seat in the U.S. Senate next year. Instead, he plans to run against Rep. Troy Balderson again whom he almost beat in 2018. The 12th District currently includes all of Delaware, Morrow, and Licking counties as well as parts of Franklin, Marion, Richland, and Muskingum counties. However, the congressional map will be redrawn this year after the 2020 census. In addition, the state is likely to lose one its 16 seats in the House of Representatives. O'Connor, a Democrat, often came to Delaware County before the last election and mingled with the people at First Fridays and other events. He wants to be a champion for working families and families that are struggling during the pandemic. Balderson, on the other hand, is less interested in what he derisively calls "retail politics." In 2018, the "Columbus Dispatch" said that Balderson seems to be "ducking" television debates with O'Connor. He is supposed to be Delaware's representative in Washington, D.C. However, "Community Matters" hasn't seen him at all since 2018 and has rarely heard from him. O'Connor would do a better job staying in touch with constituents.

Melanie Farkas Has Community in Mind

Melanie Farkas has announced her candidacy for Liberty Township trustee. Unlike the current trustees who tend to make their decisions behind closed doors and "in a silo," she wants to be a voice for the people. There are residents who do not feel represented by the current board of trustees, she says, because the officials allow developers to come in and make the decisions for the township. While developers belong at the table, "they shouldn't be at the head of the table." Liberty Township has recently ignored its own Comprehensive Plan and zoning restrictions and permitted unwelcome growth & development on Sawmill Parkway, north of Hyatts Rd. Farkas believes

that the community as a whole should have the right to determine its future. "In my mind, the wrong way to develop is to let the tail wag the dog." – "Community Matters" agrees 100% that it is wrongheaded to ram development projects through without proper consultation with and cooperation from the affected residents. Melanie Farkas has our support.

Andrew Brenner Videoconferences while Driving

Ohio State Sen. Andy Brenner, R-Delaware, participated in a government video conference while driving, the "Columbus Dispatch" reports. He denied that he was distracted. In his defense, he says that he has been on "numerous calls while driving" in the past and does not pay much attention to the video. House Bill 283, which was introduced the same day (May 3), calls for a ban on writing, sending, or reading texts, and viewing videos or live streaming while driving. (The legislation allows for exceptions for voice-operated or hands-free use and emergency situations.) Texting while driving is currently a secondary violation for drivers over 18.

Columbus Air Quality Improves Slightly

The American Lung Association assesses air quality in more than 200 metropolitan areas across the nation. For the first time since the reporting began in 2000, Columbus has received a passing grade ("C") when it comes to ozone pollution. Both the Cincinnati and the Cleveland metro areas continue to receive an "F" for ozone pollution. Columbus and Cleveland received a "B" for particle pollution, another category that the ALA tracks, whereas Cincinnati was awarded an "A." Ozone pollution forms from heated nitrogen oxides and organic volatile compounds (OVCs). Particle pollution comes from industrial sources, diesel vehicles, and open fires & wood stoves. Both forms of pollution can make breathing harder for those with asthma or other lung conditions. Pollution has also been linked to worse outcomes in Covid-19 cases, and there is a higher likelihood for people of color to live in areas with a high pollution risk.

Columbus Zoo Executives Resign

The March 2021 issue of "Community Matters" reported on Columbus Zoo executives Tom Stalf, CEO, and Greg Bell, CFO, and predicted that they would soon resign. They have now quietly and voluntarily done so, after being accused of multiple unethical shenanigans that benefitted themselves and their families financially. Former executive director Jerry Borin agreed to come out of retirement and serve as executive director on an interim basis while the zoo conducts a national search for a new CEO. In 2019, Stalf received \$488,486 and Bell \$362,355 in total compensation, but apparently that wasn't good enough for them. The Board voted not to extend any severance payments to Stalf, but no report that we have seen indicates that the two men will be held accountable and forced to return any zoo assets. It may be difficult to calculate the exact monetary and reputational damage they inflicted. The Columbus Zoo & Aquarium has stated that all findings would be remain confidential and that there would be no public report or summary. It was only after pressure from the Franklin Co. Commissioners, the Ohio Ethics Commission, and the Ohio Attorney General that the zoo board (Keith Shumate, president) relented and agreed to a forensic audit.

Might Amtrak Return to Columbus?

Columbus is the nation's most populous city without any fixed rail service and the second most populous city without Amtrak service after the line disbanded in 1979. There is now hope that President Biden's new infrastructure plan may lead to a return of passenger rail service to Columbus. Columbus City Council on March 29 passed a resolution of support for a potential Amtrak expansion to the city. An east-west line from Pittsburgh to Chicago would connect 15 million people with rail service. Alternatively, a Cleveland to Cincinnati route that runs through Columbus and Dayton would connect the residents of Ohio's four largest metropolitan areas. – At the last council meeting of the City of Delaware, Councilman Drew Ferrell expressed excitement over the possibility that Delaware might once again a stop for passenger trains.

COSI Reopen in June

The Center of Science and Industry (COSI) in Columbus has announced that it would reopen on Thurs., June 3. COSI will be open

to the public from Thursdays through Sundays from 10 am to 5 pm. Tickets must be reserved online on advance and face coverings are required for those age 6 and older. Several COSI "experiences" will remain closed for the foreseeable future, however. All 2020 COSI memberships will be honored through the end of this year. To learn more, visit www.cosi.org.

Columbus Symphony Announces 2021/22 Season

The Columbus Symphony has announced robust plans for its 2021/22 season. The subscription season starts Oct. 22-23 and ends May 13-14. Under the baton of Music Director Rossen Milanov, the orchestra will perform major works by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Dvorak, Gershwin, Liszt, Puccini, Rachmaninoff, Schubert, and Tchaikovsky. The Columbus Symphony Chorus will be back, and there will also a number of distinguished soloists – sopranos, pianists, and violinists. All concerts will take place in the Ohio Theatre, which has a capacity of 2,800. Even at a reduced capacity due to Covid-19, the concert hall should be able to accommodate 1,200 concertgoers, the normal attendance. For more info and tickets, call 614-469-0939 or visit www.columbussymphony.com.



The old and new Crew name and logo

Columbus Crew Reveals New Name

The Columbus Crew has revealed an official new name that no longer includes the word "Crew," and fans are irate. The new name – "Columbus SC" (Soccer Club) – was apparently created without the consultation and cooperation of supporters, incl. Nordecke, the club's main supporters' group. There was no transparency and no fan input, critics argue, leading to a flawed process and disastrous outcome. In a statement, the organization stated: "The Nordecke ... would like to make clear that neither the Nordecke nor any Crew Supporters Group was involved at any time with the conception, development or design of this rebrand." Currently, 16 of 27 MLS teams name their clubs after cities, with no nickname attached. Apparently, the owners felt they had to go along with the "MLSification" of soccer and bring greater attention to the city. However, as Michael Arace wrote in the "Columbus Dispatch": "This rebranding is [a] public relations nightmare, artificially constructed, completely tone-deaf and horribly mistimed." A petition is currently being circulated on social media to return to the old name, "Columbus Crew SC."

Update: After a severe backlash, the Crew owners agreed to restore the old name, "Columbus Crew." They acknowledged having made a mistake, apologized to the fans, and promised to establish a better communication system between the club and supporters.

The new 20,000-seat Crew Stadium will open its gates on July 3 when the Crew plays the New England Revolution. Once open, the Crew will play 12 more games Major League Soccer games in 2021. The facility is located near the Arena District at Astor Park. It cost \$313.9 million to build. The City of Columbus claims that no public money is directly connected to the stadium, but the sale of the land was tied to Mayor Andrew Ginther and City Council and Columbus has committed \$113.9 million on projects surrounding the stadium.

Ohio Village Opens July 7

The Ohio Village, located on the grounds of the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus, will be open this summer from July 7 through Oct. 31. It will be open to the public Wednesdays through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm. The historic village offers visitors the chance to learn about life, fashion, food, arts & crafts, and entertainment during America's antebellum period. When members of "Community Matters" last visited the village, it was a bustling place packed to the gills. No doubt Covid-19 restrictions will apply this summer, and face masks are likely to be required inside the buildings. To learn more, visit

www.ohiohistory.org. However, at last check there was not yet any information about ticket prices and health protocols on the website.

Ohio State Fair Will Be Closed to the Public

Unless rules change again, the 2021 Ohio State Fair, scheduled for July 28 to Aug. 8, won't be a public event this year. Instead, it will focus on agricultural and educational competitions, such as 4-H, for participants, exhibitors, and their families. Although Ohio has relaxed the rules for indoor and outdoor gatherings during Covid somewhat, the financial ramifications of an Ohio State Fair with reduced attendance would be devastating, management said. Rides, concerts, entertainers, live music, food vendors, and other features will hopefully return next year. The 2022 Ohio State Fair is slated for July 27 to Aug. 7.

Columbus Celebrates Juneteenth Community Festival

Most summer festivals in Central Ohio are either canceled or online affairs, but the Juneteenth Community Festival on Sat., June 19 (5-9 pm) will be held outdoors and in person at the Phenix Banquet Center at 2101 Noe Bixby Rd. in Columbus. The venue is located on Columbus' east side near I-70. Organizer Yemi Ogungbadero says there will be live music, dancers, and food vendors stretched across the 5-acre space to ensure social distancing. – Juneteenth marks the end of slavery in the Southern States and celebrates the emancipation of Blacks. For more info, visit www.phenixeventvenuecolumbusoh.com.

Galena Summerfest on August 28

Another in-person event this summer is the Galena Summerfest on Sat., Aug. 28 (11 am – 11 pm) in downtown Galena, just south of Sunbury near Hoover Reservoir. Follow Galena Summerfest 2021 on Facebook for the latest updates and details. – The 2020 event was cancelled due to Covid-19.

STATE OF OHIO

Ohio Ends Health Mandates June 2

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine has announced that the state's mask mandate and most other Covid-related health orders will end on June 2. The only exception are face coverings for nursing homes and long-term care facilities. After June 2, restaurants and bars may relax social distancing and mask rules. Retailers and establishments still have the option of asking customers to be masked, however. DeWine did not have much of a choice in the matter. GOP lawmakers overruled him and passed legislation to dissolve all mandates, regardless of the continued high infection rate in the state. That legislation takes effect June 23.

Ohio Ranks the Bottom in Human Health

For the past decade, Ohio has consistently ranked near the bottom (#47) in human health, along with Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia, according to the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (www.hpio.net), which gathers data on more than 100 metrics. While health-care access is good, there are enormous discrepancies in health outcomes. For example, the life expectancy in Franklinton (Franklin Co.) is only 60 years, the life expectancy in Stow (Summit Co.) is 89.2 years, a 29-year gap. About 52% in Franklinton live in poverty whereas Stow is a city with a median household income of \$73,201. Ohio spends a lot of money on downstream medical care, but it sorely lacks in prevention efforts, child mortality, mental-health spending, substance abuse, tobacco prevention, obesity, routine checkups, and the list goes on. High unemployment and incarceration rates also have a negative impact on population health. Life expectancy in Ohio is significantly below the national average of 77.8 years in 2020. – The healthiest 5 states are Hawaii (#1), California, Utah, Maryland, and Arizona.

Ohioans Implicated in the Jan. 6 Insurrection

Ohio is a breeding ground for right-wing extremism, and it is thus not surprising that plenty of Ohioans are implicated in the January siege and insurrection at the Washington Capitol that took place on January 6. Close to 500 supporters of former President Trump have been identified and charged in connection with the

violent insurrection during which 140 police officers were assaulted and 5 people killed. (For the record: None of the accused were concealed members of antifa or Black Lives Matter.) About 20 Ohio residents have been charged in the breach so far. Here is a list of most of them:

Jared H. Adams, 26, of Plain City
Stephen M. Ayres, 38, of Trumbull Co.
Donovan Crowl, 50, of Champaign Co.
Troy E. Faulkner, 39, of Whitehall
James Horning, 44
Derek Jancart, 39, of Canal Winchester
Caleb Jones, 23, of Columbus
Terry L. Lindsey, of the Dayton area
Robert A. Lyon, 27, of Reynoldsburg
Clifford Mackrell, 20, of Lorain
Brandon Miller, 34, of Bradford
Stephanie Miller, 30, of Bradford
Bennie Parker, 70, of Morrow
Sandra Parker, 60, of Morrow
Christine Priola, 49, of Willoughby
Ethan C. Seitz, 31, of Bucyrus
Alexander Sheppard, 21, of Powell
Justin Stoll, 40, of Wilmington
Dustin B. Thompson, 36, of Columbus
Jessica Watkins, 38, of Champaign Co.

Voting Groups Trying to Delay Ohio's 2022 Primary

The U.S. Census Bureau announced in February that its new data would not be fully available until Sept. 30 – five months later than normal. That late date makes redistricting and remapping Ohio in time for the primary election for governor, U.S. Senate, and congressional on May 3, 2022 difficult. For that reason, voting groups like the Ohio League of Women Voters (LWV) and Common Cause are working on delaying the primary from May to sometime in June of 2022. That would give local boards of elections and the candidates themselves more time to prepare. It can be assumed that Republicans are not eager to go along with the proposal. They like the gerrymandered status quo, which gives them a political advantage. If there is any way for them to avoid the mandated redistricting – perhaps due to the Covid-19 emergency –, they would exploit it. Ohio Gov. DeWine has already stated that he sees no need to delay the deadline.

Rep. Steve Stivers to Leave Congress

Rep. Steve Stivers from Upper Arlington has announced that he is leaving Congress early to become the next president and CEO of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, effective May 17. He will replace Andrew E. Doehrel who retired. Stivers, 55, of Upper Arlington represents Ohio's 15th District. His decision implies he won't run for U.S. Senate in 2022. Within hours of his announcement a slew of politicians on both sides of the aisle expressed their interest in the seat he is vacating. Dates for a primary and general election to replace him will be announced at a later time by Ohio Governor DeWine. – Stivers has been a less radical and extreme Republican than many others. His focus has been on jobs, economic development, and free enterprise, not on ideological "culture wars." He has a record of bipartisanship that will serve him well in his new position. Former U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi took a similar route in 2018 when he left Congress to become head of the Ohio Business Roundtable. The current GOP is no longer welcoming reasonable, moderate Republicans.

Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley to Run for Ohio Governor

Dayton mayor Nan Whaley announced on April 19 that she will run to be the Democratic nominee for Ohio governor in 2022. She is the first Democrat to declare her candidacy. (Cincinnati mayor John Cranley is also planning to run for the Democratic nomination.) Whaley, 45, is currently in her second 4-year term as Dayton mayor. Born in 1976, she attended the Univ. of Dayton ('98) and also holds an M.A. degree from Wright State Univ. She or Cranley are likely to take on incumbent Mike DeWine. Whaley has criticized DeWine for not doing enough to root out corruption in Ohio and for caving to the "extremists" in his party on common-sense gun-control measures.

Ohio has never had a female governor other than Nancy P. Hollister who served on an interim basis for 11 days.

Tim Ryan Launches Senate Bid

As expected, Rep. Tim Ryan has launched his bid for Senate. He is the first and only Democrat so far running to replace Sen. Rob Portman. Ryan, 47, is of Howland Township near Youngstown. He has a law degree and has served in Congress since 2003, replacing Jim Traficant. His career has focused on working-class issues, and his message is similar to that of Sen. Sherrod Brown. Ryan has written two books, "A Mindful Nation" (2012) and "Real Food Revolution" (2014). – It did not take long for Ohio Republican Party chairman Bob Paduchik to accuse Ryan of marching "in lockstep with ... radical, left-wing policies." He provided no specifics.

J. D. Vance Running for Sherrod Brown's Senate Seat in 2022

James David ("J.D.") Vance, the author of "Hillbilly Elegy" (2016), is once again attempting to run for the Senate seat of Sherrod Brown. Vance studied law, became a venture capitalist, and considered a bid in 2018 after Josh Mandel dropped out. However, he eventually decided against challenging Brown, a popular Democrat. His company, Narya Capital (named after Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings"), is headquartered in Cincinnati, where Vance now lives with his wife and two sons. It supports startups outside of Silicon Valley and was backed by Peter Thiel. Thiel has now given Vance \$10 million for Protect Ohio Values, a super PAC formed in February to support the bid. Vance also received "a significant contribution" from the family of Robert Mercer. ("Mercer was an important investor in Breitbart News and a force in the campaign for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union," according to the Columbus Dispatch.) Protect Ohio Values was formed on Feb. 24 with help from Timothy Koch of Koch & Hoos. The treasurer is Vicki J. Hoffman of Columbus, Ohio. Bryan Lanza, who previously worked for Donald Trump, serves as communications adviser.

Josh Mandel Is Running for Senate

Josh Mandel, 43, is one of several candidates in the running to replace retiring Senator Rob Portman. He is facing difficult odds. One of his opponents, former Ohio GOP Chair Jane Timken, is the wealthier and better connected one. Then there is his hometown newspaper, "The Plain Dealer." Editor Chris Quinn explained in mid-March that his paper cannot and will not cover Josh Mandel in the same way as it does other candidates because of the politician's "history of not telling the truth." "More recently, he is given to irresponsible and potentially dangerous statements on social media. He's proven himself to be a candidate who will say just about anything if it means getting his name in the news. We have not dealt with a candidate like this on the state level previously." Apparently, Twitter feels the same way about Mandel. On March 16 it restricted his account for 12 hours for violating the company's policies on "hateful conduct" and promoting violence against individuals based on race, ethnicity, national origin, or other factors. Mandel condemned Twitter's move as "censorship," but many in his own party have decried his "bigotry" (Matt Dolan) that tarnishes the reputation of the GOP and said that Josh Mandel continues to offer nothing of substance in the race for U.S. Senate" (Jay Hottinger). – Earlier in April, Josh Mandel attempted to boldly crash a donor retreat by the Republican National Committee (RNC) at the Four Seasons Resort in Palm Beach, Florida. He did manage to get some face time with top Republican donors before he was escorted out because he was not an invited guest. Jane Timken, on the other hand, was allowed to stay "because she is a major donor" to the party. The incident illustrates that in the eyes of many, Mandel is a persona non grata and that it is unlikely that he will get the coveted endorsement of the GOP.

Ohio Lobbyist Neil Clark Found Dead

The messy HB 6 saga, perhaps the biggest scandal in Ohio history, lives on and will probably haunt the state for years to come. Now the body of long-time lawyer and lobbyist Neil Clark was found near his home in Bonita Springs in Collier County, Florida. A handgun and 2019 Lincoln was recovered nearby. It appears the death was a suicide, but it's also possible that the suicide was a masked homicide. The results of an autopsy have not yet been released. Clark, 67, was one of Larry Householders co-conspirators and was arrested and

indicted on racketeering charges in 2020. He denied any wrongdoing and pleaded not guilty. Clark was involved in Ohio politics and dirty, shady practices for decades, going back to the "pancaking" scheme in the 1990s. He called it "political consulting." His nickname was "the 34th senator." As a lawyer, he defended ECOT, the Beer & Wine Association of Ohio, and payday lenders. In interviews, he admitted that he did not care about public approval. According to Clark's wife, the couple was having financial difficulties at the time Clark died. In October 2020, Clark told reporters that he had finished a book about his decades in Ohio politics and planned to publish it in 2021. His obituary says that the title of the memoir is "What Do I Know? I'm Just a Lobbyist." The status of the manuscript remains unclear. There is currently no book by a Neil Clark slated for publication.

Andrew Wheeler Joins Heritage Foundation

Andrew Wheeler, the former EPA director under Pres. Trump, has joined the conservative Heritage Foundation as a visiting fellow. He will advise the think tank about energy production, environmental regulations, and climate change. Wheeler, a native of Butler, Ohio, and a graduate of Case Western Reserve Univ. in Cleveland, was once a Washington lobbyist who worked for Murray Energy Corp., one of the largest coal-mining companies in the U.S. Heritage President Kay James praised Wheeler for "rejecting aggressive government regulation." The Trump administration abandoned the 2015 Paris Agreement, which seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Joe Biden rejoined the agreement on his first day in office. A bunch of former Trump sycophants have found a safe haven in the Heritage Foundation, incl. former Vice President Mike Pence. Don't expect to find accurate, objective, impartial information there. The think tank openly fights for "conservative principles" and has declared war on the Biden administration.

Former Pike County Sheriff Convicted

Charles Reader, the former Pike County Sheriff, was sentenced to 6 years in prison on felony charges and 6 months in the county jail on a misdemeanor. Most of the original 18 charges were dismissed as part of a plea deal, incl. a first-degree felony charge of engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity. Since the sentences will run concurrently, he will serve a total of 3 years. Reader, 47, pleaded guilty to stealing money seized from arrests, but not to finance his gambling addiction, as prosecutors contended, but for charitable purposes. He says he always replaced the cash in due time. The evidence, however, shows that Reader's gambling losses were significant. His attorney also claimed that Reader suffers from PTSD, depression, and anxiety. However, the visiting judge, Patricia Cosgrove, was unswayed. She noted that Reader was also guilty of theft and tampering with evidence. She repeatedly stated that the former sheriff had dishonored his profession, community, and family. – Reader joins a long list of former sheriffs who broke the trust of their communities and were convicted of various crimes. The list includes former Delaware County Sheriff Walter L. "Magnum" Davis III and his predecessor, former Delaware County Sheriff Al Myers.

Election Ballot Boxes Limited to One per County

Ohio Secretary of State, Republican Frank LaRose, has once again issued a contentious directive that limits the number of ballot-drop boxes to one per county for the May 4 primary. A similar order in 2020 was fiercely criticized and litigated as a form of voter suppression by Ohio cities, Democrats, unions, and civil-rights groups. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the drop-off of ballots has become a growing trend, but state and national Republicans continue to be opposed to expanding them in populous counties and large cities such as Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus where voters tend to favor the Democratic Party. Of course, this is 100% a racist attempt to disenfranchise BIPOC voters many of whom have limited means and transportation opportunities. It absolutely makes no sense to have the same number of drop boxes in counties with a population of barely 15,000 (Vinton Co.) and counties with more than 1 million people. At a minimum, election drop boxes should be installed at every public library in State of Ohio.

PUCO Has New Commissioner

Governor Mike DeWine has chosen former Judge Jenifer A. French to lead the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). She

replaces Sam Randazzo who resigned at the end of last year amid questions and allegations surrounding HB 6 and a \$4.3 million payment from FirstEnergy. He resigned after the FBI searched his Columbus home. He has so far not been charged with a crime. French, a Republican, has no ties to and no experience in the energy sector, but DeWine stated that at this point in time this may be "a real asset" because she is untainted from the stench of corruption. He said that the former judge has a reputation of studying complex issues before her to come to a just conclusion. Randazzo's open hostility toward renewable energy is well known. It is not clear where French stands on the issue, but she is not known to be an advocate of progressive values. She will have to be approved by the Ohio Senate. Consumer groups expressed disappointment that once again a consumer representative was not appointed to the commission to balance the utility background of other commissioners. – Some reports have mixed up Jenifer A. French and Judith ("Judi") L. French, the former Ohio Supreme Court Justice whom DeWine appointed to lead the Ohio Dept. of Insurance. While the two women have a lot in common, they don't appear to be related.

Ohio Passes House Bill 67

Ohio legislators had planned to waive mandatory testing of high school juniors and seniors during the Covid-19 pandemic and let school districts choose whether to test students or not. Education has never been a priority for state lawmakers, and both school funding and student testing have been neglected for decades. After the Biden administration in February announced it would not waive federal testing requirements, however, Ohio legislators scrambled to come up with a bill that would satisfy the U.S. Dept. of Education while not causing a backlash in Ohio. House Bill 67 allows juniors and seniors across Ohio high schools to substitute their end-of-year grades for the statewide final exams. It also waived the American history exam requirement and exempt home-schooled children from yearly evaluations. Exam results will be published by the Ohio Dept. of Education, but they won't impact school rankings or eligibility for the EdChoice scholarship (voucher) program. While it is true that 2020 was a challenging year for schools, teachers, and students, efforts to limit testing have been in place for years. Dozens of nations have superior education systems and their students are outperforming American students on global tests (e.g., PISA). In the U.S., there isn't even an agreed-upon national standard. Ohio, in particular, is among "the dumbest states," according to Safehome.org. Many graduating high school students are neither college-ready nor ready for work.

"Stand Your Ground" Law Started April 6

In December, Republicans passed a "Stand Your Ground" law. It goes into effect Tues., April 6. The legislation removes the legal requirement that people retreat from a situation before using deadly force. The new law supposedly does not change the standard for using lethal force: a person must have the legal right to be where they are; has to fear for their life; and cannot be the one who starts the altercation. Proponents of the law argue that Ohio's "Stand Your Ground" law will help save lives. Opponents worry that the new "Make My Day" law will make Ohio less safe and increase injuries and fatalities. For instance, the "fear" standard is a very subjective one. Police officers routinely shoot and kill people who inadvertently put their hands out of sight, saying they felt threatened and feared for their lives. And what defines the "start" of an altercation? Is pulling the trigger a justified response to hateful words or being hit? "Shoot first laws" lower the threshold for the extrajudicial killing of people of color. Black people are already under siege in the U.S. "Stand Your Ground" laws, which are directed against the Black population in particular, will further aggravate the situation.

Guilty Plea in the 2016 Rhoden Murders

Eight members of the Rhoden family were murdered 5 years ago in Ohio's Pike County. In a surprise move, Edward ("Jake") Wagner has pleaded guilty to 8 counts of aggravated murder. In all, he pleaded guilty to 23 charges. In exchange, prosecutors dropped the possibility of the death penalty. Wagner also agreed to cooperate with prosecutors in the cases against his parents and older brother who are likewise charged in the murders. Jake Wagner had one or two children with Hanna Rhoden, one of the murdered, and the killings seem to have been about the custody and control of the

children. The Wagner family was arrested in 2018, but had so far pleaded not guilty.

Physician in Dr. Richard Strauss' Case Loses License

A physician connected to the Richard Strauss case, Dr. Ted W. Grace, has voluntarily surrendered his license to the State Medical Board of Ohio. Dr. Grace served as director of OSU's Student Health Services from 1992 through 2007 before moving to another university out of state. During that time, he failed to report Dr. Strauss' sexual misconduct and made "false" statements. His step means he will forgo an administrative hearing scheduled for later in April. His Ohio medical license is "permanently revoked," and the case against him is now officially "closed."

Judge Jason Warner Sentenced to Prison

Marion Judge Jason Warner and his wife Julia were sentenced to prison for two years each after they were convicted of one count of leaving the scene of an accident and one count of tampering with evidence. After they caused an accident in June 2020 that severely injured Colton Gray, who was 19 at the time, they left the scene, concealed their car in their garage, and did not contact law enforcement until nine and a half hours later. Witnesses stated that they saw Julia Warner drive. Both got out of their vehicle after the crash, but then kept on driving. The 9-hour time lapse prevented the police from conducting any sobriety tests. The couple will be able to apply for judicial release six months from now. They are currently held in separate facilities. – Defense attorneys Sam Shamansky and Lisa Tome have filed motions to appeal the decision by visiting judge Patricia Cosgrove. Ohio Attorney General David Yost, however, has requested that the appellants' motion be denied.

Attorney Sam Shamansky Is a Busy Man

Samuel H. Shamansky is a busy man these days. You seem to see the name "Sam Shamansky" almost every time you open the "Columbus Dispatch." He is not only the prominent attorney for several individuals accused in connection with the Jan. 6 riots in Washington, but for years he has also been the defense attorney for various police officers accused of misconduct. He is currently also the lawyer for former Chief Financial Officer of the Columbus Zoo, Greg Bell, who stands accused of misappropriating zoo assets. In addition, there is the Marion Judge Warner and his wife who left the scene of an accident they caused after having had too much to drink. Just now, Nehemiah Martin was acquitted of murder charges in a Jan. 22 shooting. And these are just the examples of the last few weeks. Columbus-based Shamansky, who has his J.D. from Capital Univ. (1985), appears to be the go-to man for desperate people who know they are in serious trouble and don't mind paying twice the standard fee. In other words, hiring Shamansky is almost tantamount to an admission of guilt. Criminal-defense work obviously pays well. How does he do so much? Well, he has associates, of course. But if you read the online reviews, it also seems that he is sometimes unprepared in cases that have a lower profile.

John Boehner Publishes Memoir, Condemns Trump

John Boehner, the former Republican House speaker who left Congress before Pres. Trump was elected, has published a memoir – "On the House: A Washington Memoir" (St. Martin's Press, 288 pp.). The book came out on April 13. Boehner represented Ohio's 8th congressional district from 1991 to 2015. His memoir goes all the way back to the impeachment trial against former Pres. Clinton, which Boehner now regrets. But he has also lots to say about former Pres. Trump and the current state of the Republican Party. He accuses Trump of "stoking the flames of conspiracy" and having "incited that bloody insurrection" at the Capitol on Jan. 6. He calls the siege "one of the lowest points of American democracy." He also criticizes the Republican Party for having been taken over by "whack jobs." Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, for example, is "Lucifer in the flesh." Sarah Palin was "one of the chief crazies." The party Boehner once helped lead has become unrecognizable, he laments. The Jan. 6 events should have been a wake-up call for a return to "sanity," he writes, but the outlandish lies and conspiracy theories continue to this day. – In response, spokespeople for Trump condemned the former Republican leader Boehner a "swamp creature" and just another "RINO" (Republican in name only). Boehner was also criticized by Democrats.

They accuse him of having invited these “crazies” and “loonies” into the party and government. They say he should have and could have done more to fight these forces when he was in a strong position to do so instead of enabling them. “So spare us your righteous indignation,” wrote the liberal magazine “Mother Jones.” The “New York Times Book Review” also noted that as a work of history, the memoir falls short mainly because it fails to mention that Boehner was part of the generation that built the bridge to the Tea Party and to Donald Trump.

Black Poets in Ohio

The monumental collection “African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song” (Library of America, 2020, 1110 pp.), ed. by Kevin Young, includes many Ohio-born poets. Here is an alphabetical list of them. “Community Matters” may profile some of them in future issues, perhaps starting with Paul Laurence Dunbar or Rita Dove.

- Hanif Abdurraqib, b. 1983, Columbus
- Samuel W. Allen, 1917-2015, Columbus
- Russell Atkins, b. 1926, Cleveland
- James Madison Bell, 1826-1902, Gallipolis
- Carrie Williams Clifford, 1862-1934, Chillicothe
- Rita Dove, b. 1952, Akron
- Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1872-1906, Dayton
- Mari E. Evans, 1923-2017, Toledo
- Ross Gay, b. 1974, Youngstown
- Nikki Giovanni, b. 1943, Knoxville, TN (raised in Cincinnati, OH)
- C. S. Giscombe, b. 1950, Dayton
- A. Van Jordan, b. 1965, Akron
- Thylas Moss, b. 1954, Cleveland
- Marilyn Nelson (Wanick), b. 1946, Cleveland
- Pricilla Jane Thompson, 1871-1942, Rossmyrne



High-School Student Publishes Book on Kings Island

A 17-year-old high school student, Evan Ponstingle, has published an illustrated book on the history of Kings Island. The complete story of Kings Island has never been told before. Ponstingle, a student at Mason High School in Warren Co., worked at the nearby theme park as a teenager. He began to interview numerous former employees, managers, and executives in 2019, incl. founder Gary Wachs who provided the foreword, and soon had a growing collection of personal recollections. A draft of the manuscript was ready the following year. Finding the right publisher was difficult during Covid, but Ponstingle persisted, and the book appeared on April 12. Ponstingle plans to attend BGSU in Fall 2021 to study Resort & Attraction Management. – “Kings Island: A Ride through Time” (Rivershore Creative, 396 pp., \$21.95) is available through amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. Learn more and view some pictures at www.rivershorecreative.com. – Kings Island officially opens the 2021 season on Sat., May 15. All 2020 season passes will be honored during the 2021 season.

Ohio Supreme Court to Decide Future of Newark Earthworks

The Ohio History Connection and the Moundbuilders Country Club have been arguing over the golf course property in Newark, Licking County for years. The 134-acre property is owned by the nonprofit Ohio History Connection, but it is currently leasing it to the golf club. The lease runs through 2078. The golf club only allows public access to the ancient Hopewell earthworks at open-house days four times year. The Ohio History Connection wants to buy back the lease by eminent domain and convert the property to a public park. The ultimate goal is to nominate it for inclusion in UNESCO’s World Heritage List, which would be a tremendous economic boost to Newark, Licking County, and Ohio as a whole. Without full public

access, a World Heritage nomination would not be possible. The U.S. Dept. of the Interior has also stated it would only forward the nomination if the golf course is removed from the site. Two lower courts have so far sided with the Ohio History Connection, which has proposed a price of \$1.7 million. The club wants \$12 million, however. The case has now gone before the Ohio Supreme Court after Moundbuilders Country Club has filed an appeal to reverse the rulings of the lower courts. An oral hearing was conducted on April 13, but a decision is not expected for possibly another six months. The Supreme Court, which has a 4-3 Republican majority, is only tasked with deciding the eminent-domain issue – whether the landlord can reclaim the property it owns for the good of the public. It will not settle the financial side of the deal. For American Indians who live in Ohio and out of state, the dispute goes beyond monetary value. For them, it means global recognition of the many contributions they have made to the world. The Adena, Hopewell, and Fort Ancient earthworks that they created in centuries and millennia past are of tremendous cosmological and mythological significance. Glenna Wallace of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, who considers the moundbuilders her ancestors, says: “The sophistication required to create this shows my ancestors were not savages.”

The Meaning of Fort Ancient Earthworks

Brad Lepper from the Ohio History Connection recently reported in the “Columbus Dispatch” (4/11) on a paper that he and others published in the journal “North American Archaeologist.” Scholars have long noted certain similarities between ancient American-Indian earthworks in Ohio, Wisconsin, and elsewhere that were built in the shapes of animals. In his interpretation, effigy mounds such as the Great Serpent Mound in Adams County or the Alligator Mound in Licking County are actually groupings of three mounds that tell key episodes from American-Indian creation stories. There is the underworld or underwater serpent, alligator, or dragon that mates with First Woman (the wishbone-shaped mounds that may symbolize her two legs). The oval commonly found in conjunction with such earthworks is the opening to her womb. During the act of mating, she acquires the serpent’s great powers, which she then passes on to create all life on Earth. Other scholars have interpreted the oval as a life-giving egg. Lepper reports that he and his team have found “numerous” examples throughout the Midwest of mounds paired with oval or conical mounds. Imagery found in rock art contain similar pairings and seem to tell the same genesis story.

2021 Ohioana Book Festival

The 15th annual Ohioana Book Festival (April 22-25) was a virtual affair. A total of 137 authors born in Ohio or living in the state participated in the free online book discussions and programs. In addition, they had to have published a book during the previous calendar year. In the past, the book festival was criticized for missing too many BIPOC authors. This year, there were 24 authors who are persons of color (17.5%). Visit www.ohioana.org to learn more about the festival, its authors, and the Ohioana Library.

THE NATION

U.S. Experiences Sharp Decline in Birth Rate

The U.S. birth rate fell 4% in 2020. There were a total of 3,605,201 births last year, the lowest number since 1979. America’s population is leveling off and in many instances declining due to a rising death rate due (Covid-19), an administration hostile to immigration, economic uncertainty, the increasing acceptance of the LGBTQ lifestyle, growing infertility, and other factors. A total of 25 states had more deaths than births in 2020. Like other industrialized countries, the U.S. no longer has a fertility rate that ensures population replacement.

Gun Violence, Mass Shootings, Police Homicides Ubiquitous

Eight people were killed and several more wounded in the latest mass shooting at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis on April 14. The 19-year-old gunman, Brandon Scott Hole, was a former employee who may have had mental-health issues. Police say he shot himself. – Such mass shootings are eerily common in the U.S. as are reports of police officers shooting and killing unarmed Black people, including

children as young as 12 or 13. The common denominator is firearms and the growing lack of inhibition to use deadly force. There is now legislation in many states that legally empowers people "to stand their ground" and pull the trigger every time they "feel" threatened by a Black face or for other subjective reasons. Objective or rational standards are no longer necessary in Ohio and elsewhere. Equally pernicious is the easy access to firearms in the nation.

Trial of Former Police Officer Derek Chauvin Ends

The former Minneapolis police officer charged with killing George Floyd in 2019, Derek Chauvin, went to trial on March 29. On April 20, the jury found him guilty on all counts. He will be sentenced on June 25. Chauvin stood accused of pressing his knee on the Black man's neck for more than 9 minutes until Floyd expired. His defense attorney said the officer did exactly what he was trained to do. He also blamed Floyd's death on drug use, a heart disease, and other speculative reasons such as possible carbon-monoxide poisoning. (The official cause of death was "cardiopulmonary arrest.") The key questions in the case were whether Chauvin caused Floyd's death and whether his actions were "reasonable" and justified. The criminal justice system routinely shields police officers from prosecution ("qualified immunity") and allows them to kill with impunity. The case against officer Chauvin seemed clear enough in the public eye. The testimony against him was damning. However, in hundreds of cases justice proved elusive in the past. In this egregious case, prosecutors succeeded in portraying Chauvin as a rogue cop who disregarded policy and training. There was no admission of systemic and structural racism within law enforcement. After the verdict was read, the nation breathed a sigh of relief. Had the verdict been "not guilty," unrest and riots were expected. – Independently from the trial, the City of Minneapolis reached a settlement of \$27 million with the family of George Floyd.

Covid Lowers Life Expectancy in U.S.

American life spans dropped from 78.8 in 2019 to 77.8 years during the first 6 months of 2020. Life expectancy of the Black population declined by 2.7 years during the same period. The gap between Black and White Americans is now 6 years. Covid-19 also hit the Hispanic community hard. For them, life expectancy dropped by 1.9 years. For Whites, it was "only" 0.8 years. Many people of color were economically disadvantaged and in poor health before the pandemic and suffered from chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Life expectancy is expected to drop further once the figures for the time period between July and December 2020 become available. We do know that so far over 500,000 people have died from or with Covid-19 in the U.S., and so a major impact on the country's life expectancy was expected.

Drug Overdose Deaths Spiked during Covid-19 Pandemic

Regina LaBelle, the acting director of the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), has announced that 88,000 people died from drug overdoses during the 12-month period ending in Aug. 2020, an increase of 27%. Americans between the ages 35 and 44 are most at risk. A primary driver is fentanyl. The Biden administration has said it would shift the government's response away from law enforcement, drug arrests, and incarceration toward treatment and healthcare for people with substance-abuse disorders. However, the president has yet to name an individual to permanently lead the Drug Enforcement Administration or the ONDCP. Since key positions remain unfilled, policy-making has been slow up to this point.

Newsmax Issues Retraction and Apology

The far-right media outlet Newsmax has retracted allegations about election fraud and issued an apology. For weeks and months, Newsmax repeated, endorsed, and amplified former Pres. Trump's accusations that Dominion Voting Systems and one of its top-ranking employees, Eric Coomer, manipulated election results in 2020. As a result, Coomer filed a defamation suit against Newsmax that has now been settled for an undisclosed amount. On April 30, the company said on its website that "Newsmax subsequently found no evidence that such allegations were true. Many of the states whose results were contested by the Trump campaign after the November 2020 election have conducted extensive recounts and

audits, and each of these states certified the results as legal and final." The text continued by saying, "Newsmax has found no evidence that Dr. Coomer interfered with Dominion voting machines or voting software in any way, nor that Dr. Coomer ever claimed to have done so. Nor has Newsmax found any evidence that Dr. Coomer ever participated in any conversation with members of 'Antifa,' nor that he was directly involved with any partisan political organization." As a result of baseless conspiracy theories and deliberately false reporting by Newsmax, One America News, Fox News, and other media outlets, a majority of Republican voters continue to believe that Joe Biden is an illegitimate president. – Various other defamation lawsuits against the Trump campaign and pro-Trump media outlets are still pending.

Liz Cheney Ousted from GOP Leadership Position

As expected, Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives on May 12 voted to remove Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., from her position as Chair of the House Republicans Conference, the no. 3 House GOP job. Cheney accepted her defeat, but remains defiant. She has accused former Pres. Donald Trump of inciting the Jan. 6 insurrection in Washington and has criticized his undermining of democracy as dangerous. House Minority leader Kevin McCarthy said the exact same thing in the past, but is now solidly in Trump's camp. "We embrace free thought and debate," he declared, but clearly the removal of Cheney is part of a cancel-culture movement within the GOP to purge anyone who is perceived as disloyal to Trump, the supreme leader. Essentially she was fired for speaking the truth. Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., has been endorsed by Trump and McCarthy as Cheney's successor, even though her voting record is less conservative than that of Cheney. There is some resistance to making her GOP Conference Chair. Several names are being circulated as possible contenders, but it looks like Stefanik is in a strong position. – Update 5/14: Trump loyalist Elise Stefanik has replaced Liz Cheney as Chair of the House Republican Conference.

Cyberattack against Colonial Pipeline

A ransomware attack against Georgia-based Colonial Pipeline on May 7 has led to major problems in the nation. The fuel pipeline, which the U.S.'s largest, transports gasoline and other petroleum products from Texas to the East Coast and supplies almost half of fuel the area uses for driving and flying – about 2.5 million barrels a day. In the week after the attack, thousands of gas stations have run out of gasoline as people started to panic and fill up their cars and containers. Airports have started to fly in fuel from elsewhere to stay in business. Colonial, which is privately owned, has not said much other than it expects to "substantially" resume its operations soon. As of May 12, normal service is still "days away." It is not publicly known whether the company has paid a ransom to get its encrypted data back. DarkSide, the criminal syndicate responsible for the attack, explained on its website that it is in business to make money, not to create chaos. DarkSide is believed to operate in Eastern Europe, possibly in Russia. It has been linked to at least 10 attacks in the past years. Extortionists typically demand a ransom from hospitals, schools, banks, companies, and police departments that heavily rely on data. However, the goal of foreign adversaries is sometimes not to extort money but to disrupt another nation's political or economic system. The latest attack once again underscores the fragility and vulnerability of America's infrastructure, which is not prepared for the challenge.

No Flu Season This Winter

There was almost no flu cases this winter, neither in the U.S. nor in the rest of the northern hemisphere. In "normal" years, the flu often leads to hospitalizations and up to 50,000 or 60,000 deaths in the nation. So, what's going on? The most plausible and convincing explanation is that lockdowns and curfews, school closings and sports cancellations, travel and social-gathering restrictions, mask wearing and social distancing helped not only reduce the spread of Covid-19 but also the spread of influenza. The fear of a "twindemic" of flu and Covid-19 did not come to pass. There are possible other explanations, among them that the flu virus was not as prevalent this winter or there were fewer new variants. The CDC does not keep tabs on flu cases, only of flu-related pediatric deaths. Only the death of

one child has been reported this season compared to 92 at the same point in last year's flu season.

House Approves Statehood for Washington, D.C.

The House of Representatives has passed a bill (HR 51) that would make Washington, DC the 51st state of the nation. Approval came by a 216-208 vote along party lines. The new state would be called Washington Douglass Commonwealth, named after abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The White House, U.S. Capitol, and the National Mall would remain federal property. Republicans are solidly opposed to statehood, largely because it would give Democrats two more seats in the Senate. An identical bill passed the House last year but died in the Senate. Now conservative senators don't have the majority anymore, they are likely to resort to a filibuster to stymie the bill. – Some 700,000 Washingtonians are not represented by a voting delegate in Congress. The majority of them is non-white; Blacks make up 46% of the population. For over two centuries, the people in Washington – while paying taxes – have been denied their right to fully participate in democracy. It would not be wrong to say that racism is one of reasons why the population of Washington, DC remains disenfranchised to this day. Republicans argue that Washington's size is too small to count, but obviously Wyoming and Vermont have even smaller populations. Some Republicans have suggested that Washington be made part of Maryland, with a voting member in the House but no new senators, but both Washingtonians and Marylanders reject the idea.

Bring Back the Fairness Doctrine!

Many decades ago (from 1949-1987), the Fairness Doctrine required American broadcasters to present a wide spectrum of diverse points of view on controversial topics. However, the law that demanded that all sides of an issue were presented was abolished in 1987 under President Ronald Reagan. Incomplete or misleading information has since proliferated not only on social media but also in the world of radio and television. Honesty, objectivity, and balance have gone out of the window, replaced by baseless conspiracy theories. The public is not nearly as informed as it could be and should be. Many consumers of news live in informational siloes that glorify one side and vilify the other. An intelligent, open-minded person has a personal responsibility to study all sides of an issue before making a decision. However, Congress could help by reintroducing the Fairness Doctrine and require newspapers, radio and television stations, and social media to present opposing and alternative perspectives on critical and sensitive issues. That's the way other civilized countries do it. The result would be more understanding and unity, less polarization and division, and a better educated society.

Republican Calls Democratic Women "Witches"

The chair of Michigan's Republican Party, Ron Weiser, has called Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, the Attorney General Dana Nessel, and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson the "three witches" and called for their "burning at the stake," the "Detroit News" reported. He also referred to the "assassination" of Republicans Fred Upton and Peter Meijer who voted in favor of impeaching former Pres. Donald Trump. In 2020, there was an actual assassination plot by militia members against duly elected Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. Obviously, Weiser's feral rhetoric is extremely irresponsible, dangerous, and destructive. There are, unfortunately, plenty of misguided people who will believe what he said. Some may act on it. Weiser also happens to be a member of the Univ. of Michigan's Board of Regents. After he failed to denounce the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol, a petition was circulated to recall him from his position or for him to resign. – Weiser has since apologized for his remarks.

Accusations of Misconduct against Matt Gaetz

Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz, a loyal supporter of Donald Trump, is under federal investigation for allegedly having a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old minor and paying her for crossing state lines and international borders for sex. The Dept. of Justice is also investigating whether campaign funds were used to pay for private travel, lodging, and dining. In interviews, the third-term congressman has admitted that he has generously provided for younger women he dated, paying for flights and hotel rooms, but denied that any of them were minors.

He claims that Democratic rivals in the House are misrepresenting his generosity toward an undisclosed number of female sexual partners. He has vehemently denied that he has broken any laws: "I have not done anything improper or wrong." Gaetz, 39, has indicated that he is considering retiring from Congress to take a job with Newsmax, a far-right television station that is seeking to cast itself as an alternative to Fox News. One of his first acts in Congress was to call for the abolition of the EPA. In 2017, Gaetz was the lone member of Congress who voted against a law intended to fight human trafficking. The investigation of Gaetz is part of a broader federal investigation of a former Florida official and close ally of Gaetz, Joel Greenberg, who was indicted in 2020 on a wide variety of charges, incl. sex trafficking girls ages 14 to 17. The Dept. of Justice is reportedly interested in whether Gaetz was part of an organized group that engaged in sex-trafficking crimes. Some of Gaetz' staff members have resigned. – Update: In an op-ed piece published in the "Washington Examiner" on April 5, Gaetz admitted that he was "not a monk," but that he had "never, ever paid for sex" and, as an adult man, not slept with a 17-year-old. He blamed the "D.C. swamp" for the allegations and said, "I am absolutely not resigning." It is noteworthy that no one in Donald Trump's circle has so far defended Gaetz, who is loathed and hated on both sides of the aisle. Many consider him an "unserious" person and his current predicament an embarrassing, self-inflicted train wreck. Gaetz has hired two prominent New York attorneys after it was revealed that Joel Greenberg is working on a plea bargain with prosecutors in exchange for his cooperation and has reportedly written a confession letter in which he says both men had sex with the same 17-year-old girl. Greenberg will plead guilty to 6 charges, incl. sex trafficking of a minor. As part of a plea deal, prosecutors agreed to drop 27 other charges. This is, of course, bad news for Gaetz.

Dominion Voting Systems Sues Fox News

Dominion Voting Systems is suing Fox News and its owner, Rupert Murdoch, for at least \$1.6 billion in damages. The company is also suing Rudolph Giuliani, Mike Lindell, and Sidney Powell for relentlessly spreading baseless disinformation about its business in connection with the Nov. 3, 2020 presidential elections. Smartmatic, another election tech company, has also filed a \$2.7 billion lawsuit against Murdoch's Fox Corporation and several Fox anchors for severely damaging its business interests. In a statement, Fox called the lawsuit "baseless" and defended its journalistic practices, calling its reports on alleged election fraud a story of significant public interest. Of course, Fox did much more than to repeat Donald Trump's newsworthy claim that the election was "stolen" from him. It uncritically repeated the falsehoods and vouched for them. It gave the conspiracy theory oxygen and legitimized it. To this day, many Fox viewers believe that Joe Biden is an "illegitimate" president.

Sidney Powell Admits to Lying

Spokesperson and lawyer for former Pres. Donald Trump, Sidney Powell, has been sued for defamation by Dominion Voting Systems for \$1.3 billion. Her non-profit group (Defending the Republic) and her law firm are also named as defendants. Powell is seeking to dismiss the lawsuit. Some of the language contained in the 54-page motion filed by her attorneys is noteworthy. The defamation suit against her should be dismissed because "no reasonable person" could possibly believe that her conspiracy theories directed at the company were "statements of fact." Her comments to the press and on television were so exaggerated, hyperbolic, unhinged, "improbable," "impossible," and "outlandish" that it would be obvious to any reasonable person that they had to be false. "Vituperative, abusive, and inexact" language is normal in the political arena and protected speech, the appeal reads. – Trouble is that not every person is "reasonable." Tens of millions of Americans did believe her, Rudolph Giuliani, Donald Trump, and others when they, in all seriousness, repeated the baseless accusations against Dominion and Smartmatic time and again before and after the Nov. 3, 2020 presidential elections. What Powell and Giuliani did was reckless, indefensible, and criminal. It was treason and an attack on U.S. democracy itself. At the very least, they should lose their law license and be disbarred for life.

Peloton Recalls 125,000 Treadmills

In April, home-fitness company Peloton denied that its treadmills were dangerous and refused to remove them from the market despite reports of injuries and deaths. Now CEO John Foley apologized for the "mistake" and said Peloton would recall about 125,000 of its treadmills, valued at \$4,295 each. (That's a total of \$537 million.) The company admitted that after having received a total of 72 reports of adults, kids, pets, or objects being pulled under the rear of the treadmill. It said it would stop producing its Tread and Tread+ models and offer full refunds. Owners have until Nov. 6, 2022. – Shares of New York-based Peloton dropped as much as 15% after the recall was announced.

MyPillow Loses \$65 Million

MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell says that his company has lost \$65 million in revenue as a result of his close ties to former Pres. Donald Trump. More than 20 major retail chains have removed MyPillow products from their shelves. Lindell is also facing a \$1.3 billion defamation suit filed by Dominion Voting Systems. To this day, Lindell is pushing the completely false and baseless narrative that the Nov. 3 election was "rigged" and "stolen" and that Biden is an illegitimate president. Lindell predicts that the rightful president "will be back in office in August." However, in over 60 court cases no evidence of massive voter fraud was presented.

NRA Bankruptcy Petition Fails

A federal bankruptcy judge has tossed out a petition by the National Rifle Association (NRA) for bankruptcy in an attempt to evade New York regulators and avoid accountability. Judge Harlin D. Hale of the Dallas bankruptcy court noted that the NRA's primary reason was not "financial." He also pointed out that concerns over "shocking" corruption, personal spending, and secrecy are on-going. One possible outcome is the appointment of an outside trustee to take control of the organization and its finances. With this decision, the future of the NRA and its chief executive, Wayne LaPierre, is increasingly uncertain.

Trump Campaign Used Deception

When the Trump 2020 campaign solicited donations from supporters last fall, it resorted to a predatory and unethical scheme that is now being investigated by the Federal Election Commission. Unbeknownst to ordinary Trump loyalists, the campaign converted one-time donations into automatically recurring monthly and weekly transfers that in some cases wiped out people's bank accounts. The practice continued through December 2020. Many of the ensnared people thought they were victims of identity theft and fraud. As complaints to banks and credit-card companies soared, the Trump campaign was forced to return \$122 million, or 10.7%, of the total money collected. In all, about 200,000 transactions were disputed. – It is in Trump's corrupt nature to be a liar, fraudster, and grifter, starting with avoiding military service and getting into business school. It remains an unfathomable mystery why gullible people continue to fall for his snake-oil rhetoric.

Trump Continues to Make Inflammatory Statements

In a fiery speech at Mar-a-Lago over the April 10 weekend, former Pres. Donald Trump expressed profound disappointment with Mike Pence. The former Vice President declined to question the election results of Nov. 3. He also called Senate Minority leader Mitch McConnell a "loser" and a "dumb son of a bitch" and physician Dr. Anthony Fauci a man "full of crap." In his typical fashion, he also lashed out against Democrats (Obama, Biden, Pelosi). In other words, Trump has not changed and matured one bit. He has pledged to retaliate against each and every "disloyal" lawmaker who did not fully support his baseless claims that the election was "stolen" from him. Trump loyalists were delighted with his speech, in which he also praised the crowds at the Jan. 6 rally at the Capitol. But more forward-looking and responsible GOP leaders are happy with Trump's continued incendiary rhetoric that led to the Jan. 6 insurrection and riots. They prefer unity instead of division ahead of the next election cycles. It is currently not clear at all what the Republican Party's goals are for the foreseeable future. Most of the Republican base loves Trump, and the party is still largely beholden to Trump and the movement he inspired. It resembles more a cult of personality than a traditional political party with a platform.

Commission to Study Possible Overhaul of Supreme Court

Former Pres. Trump appointed three justices to the Supreme Court (Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh & Amy Coney Barrett), which currently has a 6-3 conservative majority. Fulfilling a campaign promise, the Biden administration has now created a 36-member bipartisan commission to spend the next 180 days to examine a possible overhaul of the Supreme Court. Among the suggested concepts are possible term limits for the justices (they currently have lifetime appointments) and an expansion of the court to ensure an ideological balance. Republicans have condemned the proposal as "court packing," but throughout history the size of the Supreme Court has waxed and waned repeatedly, so this is not a novel idea. The Biden administration is approaching the discussion with trepidation, it seems. Not only has the commission 6 full months to study proposed changes (it is not due until October), but it is also not charged with making any recommendations to the White House. The goal of the panel is not to come up with specific proposals, but to provide Biden, Congress, and the public with an evaluation of the risks and benefits of making changes to the court. To activists, that is disappointing. They argue that the Supreme Court has become a danger to the health and well-being of the nation and democracy itself. Biden himself has so far declined to weigh in. – Justice Stephen Breyer, 82, is under growing pressure from progressives to retire soon so that Pres. Biden will be able to appoint a liberal judge while the Democrats control the confirmation process and the Senate.

Computer-Chip Shortage Continues

The mighty U.S. is experiencing a semiconductor shortage. Car manufacturers in particular are having major supply issues that delay or prevent the production of new cars. Honda in Marysville had to reduce production. Ford and GM are currently idling plants in several states. Toyota and Volkswagen also had to cut back production. The problem is actually international and will result in millions of fewer vehicles being produced in 2021. Ford estimates that the chip shortage will cost the company up to \$3 billion this year. Some carmakers are building vehicles without electrical components and park them, to be finished at a later point.

Computer chips are used in numerous electronic devices, incl. in smartphones. They have been in short supply for months as surging demand outstrips supply across the globe. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) produces between 85% and 90% of the world's advanced chips. Obviously, it is foolish for the U.S. to depend so much on foreign imports. This is a critical vulnerability for the American industry and economy. What if China, which claims ownership of Taiwan, invades the island tomorrow? It would make perfect sense to shift some of the production to the U.S. TSMC has started to build a new chip plant in Phoenix, Arizona. However, it takes years and costs billions to construct new semiconductor facilities, and so the issue will be with us for the rest of 2021 and probably beyond. Estimates project the shortage to last into 2022. Some analysts estimate that the problem will plague the auto industry and "for a few more years." It may well lead to higher prices for new and used cars and other electronic devices.

Bill and Melinda Gates Separate

After 27 years of marriage, Bill and Melinda Gates have announced that were divorcing. The couple has 3 children. Their separation is their private business, of course. However, the world has a legitimate interest in finding out what will become of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that has an endowment of some \$50 billion. The Gates have used much of their money to support childhood education around the world and to combat infectious diseases such as malaria. It appears the separation is an amicable one. Both individuals continue to believe in the mission of the foundation, which said in a statement that it did not expect any changes in the organization. Mr. and Ms. Gates will remain co-chairs and trustees of the philanthropic foundation and will continue to work together on priorities and strategies.

Harriet Tubman's Childhood Cabin Found

Abolitionist Harriet Tubman (ca. 1822-1913) grew up in her family's cabin on Maryland's eastern shore, but historians did not know the exact location of the structure until now. Her father,

Benjamin Ross, was granted 10 acres of land when he was manumitted (freed) and built a cabin in what is now the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. It was not until recently when archaeologist Julie M. Schablitsky, acting on a whim, found a coin from 1808 and ceramic shards in the area that dated to the 1820s and 1830s. Excavations are on-going. Once completed, the site will be opened to visitors. – Tubman's father felled and sold timber and was himself a conductor of the Underground Railroad. He taught her to navigate the landscape and make her way through words and streams. His daughter also interacted with Black mariners called "Black Jacks" who transported the timber to Baltimore shipyards. They taught her to read the stars at night. Tubman had few resources at her disposal, but she made 13 trips into the South over a 10-year period and helped about 70 enslaved people to escape into freedom.

Harriet Tubman, "Wade in the Water"

"Community Matters" recently became aware of the spiritual "Wade in the Water" that Harriet Tubman's used during her work. Many contemporaneous songs contained concrete information to help slaves escape. The "gourd" was the Big Dipper with the nearby North Star that would guide the escapees in the right direction. Slaves were denied literacy, so religious spirituals were used as a form of clandestine language to teach them ways to hope and to cope. In this song, wading in the water was a technique that erased body scent and shook off blood hounds. It allowed escapees to go undetected. There are many variations of the simple spiritual. Some contain references to the parting of the sea and the drowning of the oppressors who pursued the Israelites. The abbreviated version below is one of dozens in existence. Recordings can be found on YouTube.

"Wade in the Water"

Chorus

***Wade in the water, wade in the water, children.
Wade in the water. God's gonna trouble the water.***

***Who are those children all dressed in red?
Must be the ones that Moses led.***

Chorus

***Who are those children all dressed in white?
Must be the ones of the Israelites.***

Chorus

***Who are those children all dressed in blue?
Must be the ones that made it through.***

Chorus

Kazuo Ishiguro, "Klara and the Sun"

"Klara and the Sun," the new novel by Nobel Prize winner Kazuo Ishiguro, is hard to classify and summarize. Like his previous books (e.g., "The Remains of the Day") it leaves the reader in an unsettled, pensive state. The story takes place at one point in the future when some children are genetically edited ("lifted") but others are not. Ishiguro is a subtle author who leaves many things unstated, but foreboding, dystopian elements are clearly present. The title character, Klara, is not human at all. She is a solar-powered robot, an "AF" (Artificial Friend) or companion designed to assist real people who can afford them. In Klara's case, her protegee is Josie, a sickly young girl. Klara has a great capacity for learning and understanding, but there are also areas where she falls very short – the realm of the human heart, for instance. Since she runs on solar energy herself, she assumes (not entirely incorrectly) that the sun has vast powers and may be able to heal Josie of her infirmity. Klara's kinship with the sun, who in her world is a "he," defines much of the book. Even on cloudy days, she is "always aware of where he is above me" (p. 298). She speaks and prays to him and goes so far as to sabotage a machine responsible for pollution that blacks out the sun. Is it merely "AF superstition" (p. 287), as one character refers to her curious sun cult, or is there more to it? In the end, Josie is cured and moves onto college. Klara's job is finished, and she is now disposable and dispensable. However, Josie's mother insists that Klara not be dismantled but be allowed so slowly "fade," given her almost human nature and her self-sacrifice.

Imbolo Mbue: "How Beautiful We Were"

Imbolo Mbue was born in Cameroon on the African west coast, a neighboring country of Nigeria, and grew up in the coastal town of Limbe. Today, she is an American citizen. Her latest novel, "How Beautiful We Were," is about the fictional African village of Kosowa whose residents are fighting a battle against a multinational oil company, Pexton, that is poisoning their water, land, air and killing their children and animals. Hollow promises of remediation and reparations remain unfulfilled. The oil brought wealth to some influential people, but not to the residents of the area. Mbue's main character is a child, Thula, but motives of major African writers and the African-American freedom movement are woven into the story, making it a compelling read. The novel is not a black-and-white or good-versus-evil narrative. The author is fully cognizant of the fact that everybody is complicit in the atrocities of modernity, and that on one level everybody has good intentions to create a better life for themselves. But there is no denying that corporate greed and the reckless pursuit of profit is responsible for the ecological nightmare the residents of Kosowa are facing.

Gary Paulsen Writes Memoir

Author and outdoorsman Gary Paulsen, now an octogenarian, has written a new memoir about his formative years: "Gone to the Woods" (2021). Paulsen is the master of nature-survival stories. Turns out he had a difficult childhood, but thanks to the right people in the right place at the right time he persevered and prospered, becoming a prolific reader and writer. If you love Paulsen's many books, you will love his autobiography. Recommended.

"When Harry Becomes Sally"

"When Harry Becomes Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment" (2018) is a pernicious book by right-wing crusader Ryan T. Anderson. The book criticizes progressive ideas about gender and transgender rights. Anderson is opposed to the LGBTQ movement in general and to same-sex marriage in particular. Based on junk science published by Dr. Paul McHugh, he argues that transgender people suffer from delusions and that being transgender is a form of mental illness. Amazon has now removed the title from its web store. Conservatives, of course, see it as yet another example of "cancel culture" in their ideological war against human rights, compassion, and tolerance.

PBS Series on Ernest Hemingway

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), a major American writer, is still revered around the world. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. During the Spanish Civil War he fought against General Franco on the antifascist side, to his everlasting credit. A 3-part documentary, "Hemingway," was shown by Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) from April 5-7. Ken Burns and Lynn Novick are the co-directors. The new PBS bio looks at "the good, the bad, and the ugly" and does not shy away from Hemingway's racism & anti-Semitism, machoism, misogyny, womanizing, alcoholism, and depression. He was also a serial killer of trophy animals. The problematic writer died by committing suicide at age 61.

Keep Flags at Half-Staff, Now and Forever

A reader from Baltimore wrote to the "New York Times" last month that flags seem to be flying at half-staff more than they are on top of the staff these days. He suggested that perhaps we should lower them to half-mast all the time and said, "Maybe keeping the flags at half-mast for 365 days a year would give Americans pause to consider the daily carnage" of mass shootings, homicides, suicides, and deadly police killings. It is interesting that German poet Paul Celan (1920-70), a Jewish Holocaust survivor, suggested the same thing in his poem "Schibboleth" ("Shibboleth"): "Setz deine Fahne auf Halbmast ... für heute und immer." – "Set your flag at half-mast ... today and forever." The human world is not a happy place, and perhaps we should indeed make half-mast the default standard. Only at special occasions would the flag be hoisted at the top to celebrate and commemorate the rare and fleeting moments of happiness.

the nightmare has ended

the nightmare has ended
the morning has come
and broken into pieces
is the rule of the scum

we stood at the brink
of a bottomless abyss
daily we recoiled from
hell's deadly kiss

for too long the devils
were prancing and dancing
their murderous army
was steadily advancing

the monsters are gone now
but they are not dead
they left us marred and scarred
with deep-seated dread

we must never forget
their disfigured faces
for they will rise again
from their hiding places

don't be afraid then
to take a last stand
keep your sword sharp
and close at hand

THE WORLD

Covid-19 Update

In mid-May, more than 180 nations worldwide have confirmed cases of the coronavirus. Globally, 165.5 million people have been infected, and about 3.43 million have died. The following nations have the highest numbers worldwide.

- US: 32,997,496
- India: 25,496,330
- Brazil: 15,732,836
- France: 5,959,593
- Turkey: 5,139,485
- Russia: 4,900,995
- UK: 4,466,220
- Italy: 4,167,025
- Spain: 3,619,848
- Germany: 3,615,962

Study Says, More than 900,000 Died of Covid-19 in U.S.

A new study by researchers at the Univ. of Washington says that the number of people who died of Covid-19 in the U.S. is greater than 900,000, a number that is 57% higher than the official figures. Worldwide, the study argues, the actual death rate is nearing 7 million, more than double the reported number of 3.24 million. The researcher's from the Univ. of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation looked at so-called "excess deaths" from March 2020 through May 3, 2021. In some countries around the world – esp. in Brazil, India, Mexico, and Russia – the gap between reported and actual numbers is even bigger than in the U.S. In several nations actual deaths may be 10 times higher than the official numbers. Millions have died without being tested and/or outside hospitals. There are also governments that hide their true numbers intentionally. While scientists may disagree about specific details, there is consensus that in many parts of the world Covid-19 deaths have been widely undercounted.

U.S. Troops Leave Afghanistan

The Biden administration has decided to pull out all American troops from Afghanistan, effective Sept. 11, 2021. The war has lasted 20 years, cost 2,400 American lives, and cost \$2 trillion. However, the U.S. has nothing to show for it. The British and Soviet occupation of Afghanistan suffered a similar fate in the 19th and 20th

century. It remains to be seen how the word "pullout" is defined. While combat troops will be redeployed elsewhere, some weapons assistance, military training, and covert intelligence will presumably continue. In addition, security personnel is needed to protect the U.S. embassy in Kabul. Republicans criticized the decision as "reckless and dangerous" although former Pres. Trump also wanted to end the "endless war" in Afghanistan and return all troops home. Biden's and Trump's positions are actually not that far apart – both wanted to focus on "nation building" at home instead of wasting resources in corrupt, faraway places with unclear outcomes.

Biden Administration Increases Number of Refugees

The Trump administration reduced the number of permissible refugees in the U.S. to 15,000, a historically low figure that seemed to confirm the racist nature of the 44th president. Joe Biden promised on the campaign trail that he would raise the number to as much as 125,000 during his first year in office, but in the end he announced he would leave Trump's limit in place. The national and international outcry and backlash was swift, and Biden on May 3 reversed himself and said he would allow as many as 62,500 refugees to enter the U.S. in 2021. The low figure of 15,000 "did not reflect America's values as a nation that welcomes and supports refugees," he said in a statement. The U.S. "stands as a beacon of liberty and refuge to the world," he added. – Republicans, not surprisingly, opposed his move. "Increasing the refugee admissions cap will put America's jobs and safety at risk," said Sen. Tom Cotton, Republican of Arkansas. Accusing immigrants of crime and stealing jobs has been their stick, and Pres. Trump's stick, for years.

Biden Administration Keeps Landmines

Anti-personnel landmines are banned by 164 countries because of the grave danger they pose to innocent people and animals years and decades after wars are over. Oftentimes, the land cannot be used for agriculture again. The Ottawa Convention prevents nations from developing and using landmines meant to harm people and commits signatories to destroying their existing stockpiles. (Anti-tank landmines are not banned under international law.) It surprised no one when Pres. Trump overturned a 2014 Obama-era directive to limit the use of so-called persistent mines, which remain deadly indefinitely. However, it is surprising and disconcerting to hear that the Biden administration has decided to keep antipersonnel landmines in its arsenal as "a vital tool" for future wars. That's the same rationale that China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia use. Human rights groups sharply condemned the move, which sets the U.S. apart from all its democratic allies. Amnesty International said in a statement that the U.S. must change its policy on landmines as soon as possible if it wants to restore and maintain its role as a global human-rights leader. The U.N. is also sharply opposed to landmines.

France and UK Deploy Gunboats against Each Other

The simmering conflict between the United Kingdom and France over fishing rights has escalated to the point where both countries have deployed armed navy ships in the area around the British island of Jersey in the English Channel. The British islands of Jersey and Guernsey are very close to the French coast, and French fishermen are upset being denied access to waters around Jersey after decades of unfettered fishing rights. France and the European Union have accused Jersey of breaking the terms of the Brexit trade deal. France has threatened to cut off the electricity supply to Jersey. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has pledged his "unequivocal support" for the island. Both Johnson and French Premier Emmanuel Macron are facing elections, so some of this saber rattling is theater intended to impress their voters. But the fact that both sides are using language that includes terms like "gunboats" and "war" is an alarming sign that Brexit remains an unresolved issue.

Declaration against the Use of Hostages as Bargaining Chips

Several nations are known to detain foreign nationals as bargaining chips in negotiations. China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia are among the states that routinely use the tactic for political or economic leverage. Foreign diplomats, business people, or travelers are arrested under or false or flimsy pretexts and eventually released in exchange for a ransom payment or for something else of benefit. More than 50 nations have now signed a declaration or resolution that

discourages the practice. Among the signatories are the U.S., Canada, and most of the EU states. Unfortunately, the declaration is nonbinding and has no enforcement tools. It does not target any specific country.

Vatican Says Gay Marriages Are Illicit and Sinful

In a public announcement, the Vatican said on March 15 that priests and bishops are prohibited from blessing same-sex marriages because they are "illicit." God "does and cannot bless sin," the statement said. Catholic dogma holds that marriage between a man and a woman are part of "God's plan." Despite his conciliatory language, Pope Francis is opposed to gay marriage and has said that gay couples should have legal protections in the civil sphere only. Supposedly, the decision is not meant to imply a judgment on gays and lesbians. The ruling says that the Church should be welcoming toward gay people and show "respect, compassion, and sensitivity." However, the unjust discrimination is obvious. The Catholic Church considers homosexual acts as "intrinsically disordered." Catholic dogma prohibits sexual activity outside of marriage, and since gays cannot marry within the church they are technically prohibited from being sexually active. Clearly, this is a form of silencing and erasing the LGBTQ community. The Catholic Church claims to know all about "God's plan." Isn't the sun the center of God's plan for the solar system? And yet, the Church fought against heliocentricity for centuries. Isn't biological evolution also part of God's plan? And yet, the Church has fought tooth and nail against Darwinism. It is also interesting to note that for centuries the Catholic Church did not consider slaveholding to be a "sin." Was slavery part of "God's plan," then? – Luckily, Catholic priests (and non-Catholic clergy) have blessed gay marriages for years and will continue to do so, at the risk of excommunication.

North Korea Pulls Out of Tokyo Olympics

North Korea has become the first country in the world to pull out of the Tokyo Summer Olympics in Japan. Officials say the decision was made "to protect the athletes from the global health crisis created by Covid-19." Infections are soaring in Japan, and it is not certain that the games can be and will be held at all. International spectators have already been banned. Ties between N. Korea and the rest of the world have not improved in recent years, and it could well be the case that reasons other than Covid played a role as well. In addition, N. Korea's economy is struggling economically these days, and perhaps the country prefers not to pay the expense attached to sending a delegation to Japan. It is also possible that N. Korea fears that its athletes may not compete well and embarrass its fearless leader, Kim Jong Un. He just admitted that his state was in "the worst-ever situation."

Lego Thefts Are on the Rise

National Public Radio (NPR) reports that Lego thefts have soared internationally during the Covid-19 lockdown. In both Europe and America, thieves are breaking into toy stores and warehouses to steal toy sets and sell them to collectors or on the black market. Unopened sets in mint condition are particularly sought after and are worth thousands of dollars. Lego sets come out in limited editions and soon become collectors' items, making them highly valuable. – Lego bricks remain popular among children and even adults throughout the world. There are Lego clubs everywhere. Gallery 22 in Delaware recently showcased a Lego art exhibition. There is a Lego store in Easton Town Center and Bedlam Bricks near Polaris Fashion Place. The owners may want to invest in additional safety locks.

SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

U.S. and China Will Cooperate on Climate Change

Just ahead of Earth Day and President Biden's climate summit, the United States and China have agreed to restart a dialogue and to cooperate to tackle the problem of climate change. China and the U.S. are the world's two biggest carbon emitters. The Biden administration has rejoined the Paris climate accord and is committed to keeping global temperatures below 2.7 degrees

Fahrenheit. Biden's online forum will take place April 22-23. It is not yet clear of China's president, Xi, will join the summit. Some 40 world leaders were invited. Many nations are also preparing for the next U.N. climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, in November.

Germany May Elect "Green" Chancellor

Germany votes on Sept. 26 and will have a new chancellor after that since Angela Merkel declined to run again. Armin Laschet (CDU) of North-Rhine Westphalia is the conservative candidate, but he is unpopular and damaged after an intense power struggle with Markus Söder. The candidate of the Social Democrats is the current finance minister Olaf Scholz. Both the CDU and SPD have lost much public support in recent years and decades, to the benefit of various third parties. Their ideas are dated and tired. The Greens are currently the second-strongest force in the country, polling around 22%. Their candidate is Annalena Baerbock, 40. She represents the younger generation that is committed to tackling climate change. They are also socially more liberal than the older generations. It is quite possible that Baerbock will emerge as the strongest candidate on Sept. 26 and become the next German chancellor. She will have to form a coalition with other parties, however, to achieve a majority in the parliament. All leading parties have ruled out a coalition with the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party. – Update: The latest poll by Kantar, a German opinion-research company, indicates that the Greens enjoy a support level of 28%, the CDU/CSU 27%, and the SPD only 13%. In a 3-way race, Baerbock would beat her competitors with 30% to 32% of the vote while Scholz would receive 20% and Laschet 18%.

Drought Conditions in the American Southwest to Worsen

Climate change and rising temperatures have led to water shortages and abnormally dry conditions in the American Southwest – a trend that is expected to worsen in the foreseeable future. Of course, there continue to be storms with heavy bursts and large run-off, but in between them are long dry periods with little or no rain. A similar trend has been observed in the southwest Rocky Mountains, the Colorado Plateau, and the Central Plains. Climate models project more frequent and more severe droughts that could potentially lead to "megadroughts" and to what experts call "desertification" in the American south. Longer dry spells are also expected to lead to water rationing, lower crop yields, and more wildfires. – Northern states are largely spared from the accelerating cycles of heat and drought, but they are too are expected to grow warmer over time.

Greenland Election a Victory for Environmentalists

Greenland has a lot of untapped uranium and rare-earth minerals, which foreign investors are eager to exploit. The ongoing melting of glaciers and sea ice has made access and extraction easier. (Former Pres. Trump at one point also mused about purchasing Greenland.) An Australian company, for instance, has started a mining project in Kvanefjeld in the island's south. Indigenous opposition to the mine, however, played a primary role during the national elections held on April 6. The elections became necessary after Prime Minister Kim Kielsen's government collapsed amid an internal power struggle and dispute over mining. Opponents to Kvanefjeld voiced concerns over radioactive waste and toxic pollution, which would imperil another industry – tourism. Proponents welcomed the jobs and revenues the project would bring. On April 6, Greenland's environmentalist party, Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA), won 37% of the vote and thus a decisive victory. The mine project will be halted. The governing center-left Siumut party, which supported the mine, was defeated and won only 29% of the votes. – Greenland is a semi-autonomous country, supported and administered by Denmark. The sparsely populated island has only about 57,000 inhabitants.

Bottom Trawling

Bottom trawling is the practice of dragging large nets along the ocean floor to catch shrimp, whiting, cod, and other fish. The disruptive effect is similar to clearcutting a forest because it kills many other creatures as well, destroys their habitat, and wipes out biodiversity. A new study on the effects of bottom trawling published in "Nature" has now drawn attention to another pernicious effect. Scientists calculated how much planet-warming carbon dioxide (CO₂) is released into the ocean. The answer: as much as global aviation

releases into the air. China, Russia, Italy, the UK, and Denmark lead the world in such trawling emissions. Some of the carbon dioxide remains trapped in the oceans, reducing their capacity to absorb atmospheric CO₂. A large percentage of carbon dioxide eventually does escape into the air itself, contributing to global warming. The study suggests that not only land must be protected from exploitation and destruction but also water. Currently, only 7% of the world's oceans is protected, and less than 3% is highly protected. The authors say that setting aside 28% of the ocean for conservation would serve as fishing nurseries to replenish endangered and threatened fish and crustacean populations and ensure marine biodiversity. The study's recommendations are similar to those of the "30x30" initiative, the international push to safeguard 30% of the Earth's lands and waters by 2030. Currently, however, each country pursues its own narrow nationalist interests, and international cooperation is lacking.

High Degree of Pesticides in Fruits & Vegetables

Once again, the Environmental Working Group has issued a list that ranks pesticide residue levels of fruits and vegetables based on samples by the Dept. of Agriculture (DOA) and the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). Nearly 70% of non-organic produce sold in the U.S. contains 70% pesticide residues. More than 90% of strawberries, leafy greens, and apples tested positive for residues of 2 or more pesticides. Many pesticides are known carcinogens. The "dirty dozen" includes: strawberries (#1); spinach; kale, collard & mustard greens; nectarines; apples; grapes; cherries; peaches; pears; bell & hot peppers; tomatoes; and celery. The "clean fifteen" include: avocados; sweet corn; pineapple; onions; papaya; sweet peas (frozen); eggplant; asparagus; broccoli; cabbage; kiwi; cauliflower; mushrooms; honeydew melon; and cantaloupes. It would be wrong to conclude that consumers should stay away from fresh fruits and vegetables, which are an important part of a person's diet. Shoppers have the option of buying organic. Another option is to grow your own pesticide-free garden. Many people are already doing one or the other or both.

Continued Strong Interest in Gardening

Demand for all things gardening surged to such an unprecedented degree in 2020 that some companies ran out of inventory such as seed packaging. Both experienced and new gardeners were busy working in vegetable and flower beds during the Covid-19 lockdowns, curfews, and closings while working from home. Businesses are better prepared this time around and do not expect any shortages to occur. Companies such as Burpee are fully prepared for another spike in demand this season. They have stocked up on supplies and even have contingency plans in place should that be necessary. – Growing your own food (or flowers) creates better meals, reduces expenses, offers exercise, provides an education, leads to more socialization, cuts down on the use of pesticides, and increases biodiversity and wildlife habitat. We all need to "cultiver notre jardin" (Voltaire, "Candide").

Rotary Club Talk on Climate Change

A researcher from the Byrd Polar & Climate Research Center at OSU, Dr. Stacy Porter, recently gave a talk on climate change to the Delaware Rotary Club. Ohio's temperatures are already going up and will be 3-5 degrees Fahrenheit hotter by mid-century and 7-9 degrees Fahrenheit hotter by the end of the century. Both summers and winters will be warmer in the future. The effects on farming and gardening are already noticeable. Animal populations will also be impacted as some species will disappear and others migrate farther north. Another effect is the spread of tropical diseases spread by insects like ticks and mosquitoes. Flooding events are expected to increase both in frequency and volume.

What can humans do? We have 3 options, according to the speaker. We can do nothing and suffer from the effects of sea-level rise, flooding, heat, drought, and disease. We can take steps to adapt to climate change and build infrastructure that makes life more bearable. Or we can cut carbon emissions, transition to renewable energy, and reverse the harm climate change is inflicting on humanity and nature. Doing the latter would have a lot of positive co-benefits, according to Porter: "If we take actions to protect the climate, we are also making beneficial changes to our food and water systems, our

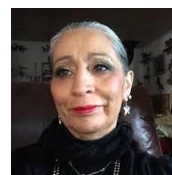
resiliency, our energy industry and mobility, our jobs, our connection to nature [and] with each other, and our physical and mental health and well-being."

OWU Lecture on "Genocidal Risk in an Era of Climate Change"

On March 30, Alex Alvarez from the Northern Arizona Univ. discussed "Genocidal Risk in an Era of Climate Change" at OWU. His presentation represented the annual Robert Kragalott Lecture on Genocide, Mass Atrocity, and Human Rights, hosted by OWU's Dept. of History. (Kragalott taught history at OWU from 1964 to 1991.) Alvarez is the author of six or so books on genocide and has presented his research in many countries across the world. His OWU talk was primarily based on "Unstable Ground: Climate Change, Conflict, and Genocide," his latest book. The study provides a guide to understanding the impact of climate change on human behavior. Alvarez predicts environmental destruction, mass migration, climate refugees, competition for natural resources (esp. water), shortages, poverty, famines, violent ethnic conflict, xenophobia, a retreat from democratic values, corruption, failed states, war, and genocide due to rising sea levels, flooding, heat and drought, and disease. During and after WW II, some 25 million displaced people were on the move. The consequences of climate change will easily surpass that number. By 2050, there may be as many as 700 million affected people. In Alvarez' view, climate change is the defining catastrophe of our age. It is much more than a mere "crisis." The entire system may collapse. There are glimmers of hope, though. International law, global cooperation, and technological solutions may alleviate the worst. He also has faith in young people and future generations. There is a chance that they will yet succeed where society has so far failed.

OWU Lecture on Biomimicry

As part of the 2020/21 Sagan National Colloquium lecture series, Jared Yarnall-Schane from the Biomimicry Institute (www.biomimicry.org) on April 7 discussed how studying nature can inspire entrepreneurs and lead to exciting new discoveries, designs, and business breakthroughs. Typical examples of biomimicry (also called bionics or biomimetics) are waterproofness, bioluminescence, spider silk, structural color, and medicines. Studying burrs led to the development of Velcro. Dissecting dead woodpeckers may lead to a way to reduce the risk of CTE for athletes. Yarnall-Schane, who has a degree in mechanical engineering, was particularly passionate about the potential of biomimicry to create a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable world free of toxins. For example, plants have long had effective strategies to fight fungal attacks. By learning from them and replicating their chemistry, humans can devise strategies that are environmentally clean and financially affordable. The speaker believes that biomimicry, or bionics, is a growth industry that may one day lead to thousands of new jobs and trillion-dollar industries. Estimates vary between \$10 trillion (World Economic Forum) and \$30 trillion. The fashion industry is but one example. Asked what advice he would give to future engineers and entrepreneurs, Yarnall-Schane said that an intimate knowledge of nature is indispensable. Study animals and plants on land, in the air, and in the water closely and see what they do and how they do it. How does a bird fly and a fish swim? How are insects able to walk on perfectly smooth windows? How is it that ants can carry loads that far exceed their body weight? Lastly, Yarnall-Schane highly recommended the award-winning website www.asknature.com. It provides thousands of possible biomimicry strategies and solutions to existing problems. His institute also provides free educational materials to teachers and parents.



LaDonna "Brave Bull" Allard (1956-2021)

To this day, Indigenous populations all over the world are oppressed and marginalized by dominant cultures eager to erase them. Agreements, if they even exist, are often ignored. Forced relocations, reeducation camps, systemic disinvestment, poverty and

disease, and even genocide are common. One of brave fighters for Indigenous rights died on April 10 at age 64 in Fort Yates, North Dakota. The cause of death was brain cancer (glioblastoma). LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, a citizen of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, became well-known nationally and internationally as a spokesperson against the Dakota Access Pipeline, a \$3.7 billion project whose ultimate fate remains unresolved. The oil pipeline risks water pollution and is too close to American-Indian burial grounds. Allard argued for the protection of sacred Indigenous lands, clean water, and Mother Earth not just in the Dakotas, but everywhere. She became an annual speaker at the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and an official representative for Indigenous peoples within the U.N.'s Economic and Social Council. She sat on numerous boards, taught classes on Indigenous knowledge, and received several awards.

Bill Gates: "How to Avoid a Climate Disaster"

Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates has studied the issue of climate change for over a decade. In "How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need" (Knopf 2021, 272 pp.), he develops a plan for how the world can get to zero greenhouse gas emissions in time to avoid a climate catastrophe. With the help of experts in the fields of physics, chemistry, biology, engineering, political science & finance, he describes the areas in which technology is already helping to reduce emissions, where and how the current technology can be made to function more effectively, where breakthrough technologies are needed, and who is working on innovations to decarbonize the world. Both government and the business community have a central role to play, he says. This is a cogent book worth reading, but not everyone will agree with Gates' thinking and conclusions. He advocates for increased investments in nuclear energy, for instance, and warns against focusing on wind and solar, due to their intermittent nature. It is also obvious that his approach to solving climate change relies very much on science, logic, big data, technology & engineering. The equally important human factor is largely ignored.

ANIMAL KINGDOM

Population of Bald Eagles Soaring in U.S.

A new survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service states that the number of bald eagles in the lower 48 states has quadrupled since 2009 to more than 316,000. The Fish and Wildlife Service found over 70,000 breeding pairs in the contiguous U.S. Bald eagles were once extirpated due to hunting, poisoning, habitat loss, and the insecticide DDT. After the ban of DDT (1992) and the Endangered Species Act (1973), bald eagles and other raptors began to recover. While the turnaround is a conservation success story, bird populations in general continue to decline in the U.S. because of habitat loss, other insecticides, climate change, domestic cats, and a host of other reasons.

Condor Egg Hatches in the Wild

A condor egg has hatched in the wild in California's Pinnacles National Park after 2 months of around-the-clock incubation by both parents. The chick, named "1078," still must survive 6 months in the nest, relying on its parents for food, protection, and companionship. – Condors were close to extinction in the 1980s when wildlife officials captured the remaining 22 condors and started a breeding and recovery program. Although the 3 birds involved live in the wild, they are under close supervision of biologists. The nest has a video camera installed to help with monitoring.

Longevity of Birds

Many animals have surprisingly long lifespans. That includes large birds. An albatross banded in 1956, "Wisdom," still produces chicks at the ripe old age of 70! Cookie, a cockatoo, died at age 83, and a captive raven survived to 80, according to naturalist Jim McCormac. Another source mentions an eagle who lived to be 80, a vulture who died at 101, and a crow who was 118. (Needless to say, the evidence is not always impeccable, but the fact remains that many bird species can grow very old.) Geese, ducks, and gulls can also reach the age of 40, especially in captivity. In 1917, a 20-year-old penguin passed away in the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. Birds

are by no means among the oldest-living animals on Earth. Many whales, sharks, and carps live to be 100 or even 200. Some clams and sponges are said to be hundreds of years old. But even the longest-living animals are eclipsed by plants such as trees. Based on their growth rings, many tree species are up to 5,000 years old! – We humans tend to think from day to day or, at best, from one year to the next. Perhaps if we thought like a whale, like a tree, or "like a mountain" (Aldo Leopold), we'd be better off.

"Secrets of the Whales"

"Secrets of the Whales," a new National Geographic / Disney+ docuseries, is worth watching. Produced by James Cameron, the 4-part series explores the lives of orcas (killer whales), humpbacks, belugas, narwhals, and sperm whales. Each episode focuses on how whales communicate, collaborate, and care for their young. The mini-series includes astounding photography, fascinating information, and artful writing. There is also an accompanying book with the same title, published by wildlife photographer Brian Skerry. Cameron says that whales are not that different from people: "They have family bonds. They have love. They have grief. They are very much like us in many ways. ... Intelligence and emotion, higher thought, culture, language, music – all of these things the whales have we also have."

Idaho Intends to Kill 90% of Its Wolves

There are currently 1,556 wolves that roam Idaho, which is a big state. Ranchers argue that's too many and say that the predators "scare" their cattle. Others claim that wolves reduce the numbers of deer and elk available to hunters. The state's attitude toward wolves is one of extreme hostility and cruelty. According to the Wolf Conservation Center, it fails to take into consideration the ecological benefits conferred by a healthy wolf population. In April, the Idaho Senate approved a bill in a 26-7 vote that would permit the state to kill up to 90% of Idaho's wolves and reduce it to 150 individuals. The surplus wolves would be killed by contractors. The bill also removes the limit on the number of wolves hunters are permitted to kill. The measure goes to the House of Representatives next. Gov. Brad Little, a Republican, is expected to sign it. In 2020, he signed another bill that increased funding for the killing of wolves. Under Pres. Trump, wolf management was transferred from the federal government to the states. In Idaho and Montana, wolves no longer enjoy federal protection.

Wayne and Susan LaPierre Shoot Elephants in Botswana

A video has surfaced that shows the head of NRA, Wayne LaPierre, and his wife Susan fatally shooting two endangered elephants in Botswana in 2013. The second half of the 10-minute video depicts guides helping Susan LaPierre to shoot a second elephant. She then cuts off the animal's elephant's tail and holds it up to the camera. "Victory," she says, "that's my elephant tail. Way cool." The video was filmed for an NRA-sponsored television series but never aired because of public-relations concerns. The LaPierres' hunting expedition came in the wake of the December 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. At the time, LaPierre condemned "murder as a way of life," but it seems that this is an adequate description of the National Rifle Association itself.

Prince of Liechtenstein Kills Protected Bear in Romania

Prince Emanuel von und zu Liechtenstein has been accused of illegally killing a large male bear in Romania's Carpathian Mountains. The European Union, of which Romania is a member, has strict laws that protect the country's population of 6,000 to 7,000 brown bears. The only exception is bears who have attacked people and/or caused harm to farms and livestock. However, Romania is a country with endemic, deep-seated corruption and the system is frequently abused. The prince did receive permission to shoot a cub-rearing female bear for \$8,500, but instead he shot and killed "Arthur," a well-known 17-years-old brown bear who was said to be the biggest and strongest bear living within the EU. Arthur, who lived deep in the woods, was not known to be a troublemaker. Agent Green, a Romanian environmental organization, said in a statement: "It is clear that the prince did not come to solve the problem of the locals, but to kill the bear and take home the biggest trophy to hang it on the wall." Romania has since halted the sale of hunting permits

to foreigners. – Trophy hunting is big business around the globe. However, in this day and age it has lost much of its erstwhile glamor. Wealthy and/or prominent people engaged in trophy hunting risk reputational loss and becoming pariahs.

baby birds

baby birds are weird and ugly
as they nestle warm and snugly
all they do is eat and snore
then they poop and peep for more

but one day the featherless
will be ready to take flight
as they flit and soar with ease
it is a miraculous sight

so it is with many things
that need time to grow
we must practice patience then
when the pace seems slow

HAPPY NEWS

Irish Supermarket Chain Provides Free Period Products

In Ireland, the German supermarket chain Lidl will offer free period products beginning in May. Under the initiative, customers can claim one free box of sanitary pads or tampons each month by downloading a coupon in the retailer's app. Observers call the move a "game changer." From Scotland to New Zealand, governments are making free menstrual products available in an attempt to end "period poverty." Others have abolished taxes on feminine hygiene products, which are increasingly considered an "essential" part of human life.

Virginia Abolishes Death Penalty

Virginia became the first southern state to ban the death penalty after Gov. Ralph Northam, a Democrat, signed the bill into law. Virginia is joining 22 other U.S. states that have ended the capital punishment. Nationwide, inmates on death row are disproportionately people of color. For the same crimes, whites often receive lesser punishments.

Maryland Repeals Its Confederate State Song

The 16th American president, Abraham Lincoln, is revered by many as one of the most consequential politicians in U.S. history. He was assassinated in 1865. However, Maryland's state song calls him "Northern scum," a "tyrant," and a "despot" eager to torch and vandalize the sacred temples of the Free State. The song was written as a poem in 1861 by James Ryder Randall and adopted as the state song in 1939. It was sung to the tune of "O Tannenbaum" ("O Christmas Tree"). Opposition to the song has grown in recent years. In 2017, the marching band of the Univ. of Maryland announced it would no longer play it before football games. However, attempts to repeal the song were unsuccessful, in part because there was no consensus about what would replace it. Maryland lawmakers have now agreed to repeal the Civil War-era state song without a replacement. The measure passed the state Senate 45-0 and the House by 95-38. Republican Governor Larry Hogan is expected to sign the bill into law. – In 2017, Marylanders removed from the Capitol grounds a statue of Roger Taney, the U.S. Supreme Court justice whose 1857 Dred-Scott decision upheld slavery and denied citizenship to Blacks. Other emblems of the Confederacy are slowly being dismantled across the American South.

49 States Honors Juneteenth

49 states honors Juneteenth as a day to recognize the end of slavery in the United States. Hawaii just became the latest state to do so after both the House and Senate passed new legislation. Hawaii Gov. David Ige, a Democrat, is expected to sign the bill. South Dakota is the only remaining state that does not commemorate or recognize Juneteenth as either a state holiday or a day of observance. South

Dakota's Senate passed such a measure, but the bill did not make it through the House.

Some Cities Provide Stipends for Artists

Many cities love to brag about their rich art scene, but have done nothing to support local painters, musicians, and writers during Covid-19. The arts and entertainment industry was hit particularly hard during the pandemic. Some cities, however, have begun to write monthly stipends to eligible artists. San Francisco has launched a pilot program that provides a guaranteed monthly income of \$1,000 over 6 months to 130 eligible artists. In St. Paul, Minnesota, the city disburses monthly \$500 checks to 25 local artists for the next 18 months to help pay for rent and food. At least 75% of recipients are people of color, according to the program. Similar programs are being developed in Atlanta and Oakland. The mayors of these two cities are part of the 41-member coalition "Mayors for a Guaranteed Income." Interest in "universal basic income" has grown over the last year or so as a potential solution to the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.



"Donkey Hodie," a New PBS Kids Series

There is a new PBS Kids series on television, "Donkey Hodie." The she-donkey, who lives in a windmill, was inspired by a character of the same name created by Mister Rogers (Fred Rogers). The puppet show contains plenty of silliness and songs, but each episode also teaches children useful strategies for how to handle challenges and overcome obstacles. For example, Donkey Hodie has to build a nest for the yodel birds, sail a pirate ship, or take a green elephant for a walk. One of her friends is the extraterrestrial Purple Panda. Children learn to ask for help or directions, show compassion and empathy, and develop patience and perseverance.

love not hate

people forever remember
how you made them feel
did you hurt and harm them
or did you help and heal

did you make them laugh
or make them cringe and weep
that primal memory
a mind will always keep

did you threaten them
with violent power
or did you embrace them
and hand them a flower

in their nightly dreams
in which you may loom
will you be their friend
or herald doom and gloom

watch what you say and do
act with love and care
if you do all that and more
you will handsomely fare

