

Community Matters

Delaware, Ohio
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**Send info, articles, or comments to
delawarecommunitymatters@gmail.com**

"Worst publication ever. Nothing but boring facts. Totally unreadable. Don't waste your time with this egg-headed nonsense. Sad."



LOCAL EVENTS

The Underground Railroad in Delaware County (2/2)

The Delaware County Historical Society presents "William Cratty and the Underground Railroad in Delaware County" on Thurs., Feb. 2 (7 pm) at The Barn at Stratford (2690 Stratford Rd.) The program is free & open to the public. William Cratty (1805-1897), a Presbyterian, was a Delaware County resident who helped thousands of fugitive slaves escape to Canada. At one point, a reward of \$3,000 was offered to any person who would deliver him, dead or alive, south of the Mason-Dixon line. He was known for "his noble life, kindly manner, and exemplary Christian character."

February First Friday (2/3) – \$

Main Street Delaware celebrates February First Friday (2/3, 6-9 pm) with a "Chocolate Walk" around Historic Downtown Delaware. For a \$15 ticket, you will visit up to 35 local businesses and receive a treat from each of them. The self-guided tour starts at 6 pm at the office of Main Street Delaware at 20 E. Winter St. where you will receive your tour map and goodie bag. Tickets are available at the Greater Gouda and Toujours. If you buy online at www.mainstreetdelaware.com, bring your payment confirmation. For more info, call 740-362-6050.

Special Film Event at OWU (2/3-4)

OWU students routinely produce documentaries, but on Fri. and Sat., Feb. 3-4 (8 pm), Film Studies minor Trent Williams will show his 30-minute film "A Raisin in the Sun," based on a play by a famous female playwright. It is a story about a black family struggling with poverty. "A Raisin in the Sun" is OWU's first film production with an entirely black cast and student director. The venue is Chappellear Drama Center (Main Stage). All are welcome, and admission is free.

MTSO Offers Workshop on Implicit Bias (2/7)

MTSO offers a lunchtime training workshop on Tues., Feb. 7 (11:45 am – 1 pm) at Dunn Hall on the MTSO campus (3081 Columbus Pike). It will be led by Lena Tenney and Robin A. Wright, race and diversity specialists at OSU. The cost for the workshop and lunch is \$10; there is no charge for MTSO students, faculty, and staff. RSVP is required. For more info, visit www.mtso.edu.

Get to Know Main Street Delaware (2/7)

Main Street Delaware is holding an open house on Tues., Feb. 7 (5:30 pm) at its office at 20 E. Winter St. If interested in learning more about Main Street Delaware and how to get involved as a volunteer, this is your opportunity to meet the new director, Susie Bibler, and explore the mission of the organization.

Lecture on Stratford Cemetery (2/8)

Dr. Jarrod Burks, Director of Ohio Valley Archaeology (OVA), will give a presentation entitled "Going High-Tech to See into the Past: Scanning the Stratford Cemetery in Search of Graves and Other Clues" on Wed., Feb. 8 (7 pm) at Stratford Ecological Center (3083 Liberty Rd.). Last August, Burks completed a geophysical survey of the Stratford Cemetery on the grounds of the Stratford Ecological Center, using a magnetometer and ground-penetrating radar. He discovered at least 108 graves in total, almost twice the assumed number. The cemetery contains recorded burials from 1816 to 1888, incl. graves of veterans from the War of 1812 and the Civil War. In his lecture, Burks will highlight his methodology, research, and discoveries. For more info, visit www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org.

Sustainable Delaware Ohio Meets (2/11)

Sustainable Delaware Ohio (SDO) meets the second Saturday of every month in the Community Room of Delaware's Public Library (84 E. Winter St.) from 9:30 to 11 a. The meetings are open to the public, but only members can vote. The agenda is normally available online a couple of days before the meeting. Visit www.sustainabledelawareohio.org for more info.

Arena Fair Theatre (2/11 + 18)

Delaware's Arena Fair Theatre presents "Absolutely, Mr. Lerner; Positively, Mr. Loewe," a Lerner & Loewe Valentine Musical Revue, on Sat., Feb. 11 and Feb. 18 (7 pm). The venue is the Blend of the Seven Winery at 1400 Stratford Rd. (the former Branding Iron). The decades-long partnership of lyricist Alan Jay Lerner and composer Frederick ("Fritz") Loewe resulted in a number of popular Broadway musicals, among them "Brigadoon," "Camelot," "Gigi," "My Fair Lady," and "Paint Your Wagon." The musical revue features many of the highlights. For details, visit Arena Fair Theatre's Facebook page or call Greg Patterson at 614-806-1569. For tickets (\$15), visit www.arenafair.com.

End-of-Life Conversations at MTSO (2/15)

Rev. Kristin Langstraat from OhioHealth will lead a presentation entitled "Talking about What Matters Most: End-of-Life Conversations" on Wed., Feb. 15 (7 pm) in the Alford Centrum on the MTSO campus, 3081 Columbus Pike (US 23 S.). The lecture is intended to provide advice as well as resources for families that find themselves faced with end-of-life situations. The program is free & open to the public.

Delaware County Democrats (2/16)

The Central Committee of the Delaware County Democrats meets Thurs., Feb. 16 (7:30 pm) at 12½ N. Sandusky St. (upstairs). The monthly meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month, but always check the website (www.delawarecountyoiodems.org) or Facebook for updates. The meetings are open to "Democrats." – As of Feb. 1, the headquarters of the Delaware County Democrats at 12½ N. Sandusky St. offers expanded hours. It is now open Tues. – Fri. from 11 am to 5 pm.

Great Decisions: The Future of Europe (2/17)

The 2017 "Great Decisions" lecture series takes off with a talk by OWU economics prof. Dr. Goran Skosples on "The Future of Europe." It will be held Fri., 2/17 (12 pm), at the William Street UMC (28 W. William St.). It is free & open to the public.

held Fri., 2/24 (12 pm), at William Street UMC (28 W. William St.). It is free & open to the public.

Comedy Show with Jamar Haynes Lee (2/18) – \$

Christian entertainer Jamar Haynes Lee will headline an interactive, family-friendly show on Sat., Feb. 18 (2-4 pm) at the Second Ward Community Initiative (SWCI) at 50-A Ross St. Lee, an ordained minister, has worked as an actor, comedian, writer, director, producer, singer, and inspirational speaker for many years. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased through www.eventbrite.org.

Memorial Gathering for Gordon Aubrecht (2/18)

A Memorial Gathering to celebrate Gordon Aubrecht's life will be held Sat., Feb. 18 (2-5 p.m.), at First Presbyterian Church at 73 W. Winter St. The event will be streamed live for those unable to attend. Gordon Aubrecht, a distinguished former OSU physics professor, passed away last year at the age of 73. His body was laid to rest on Nov. 23 in a "green burial" service in Gambier, Ohio. He was active in many national and local groups, including the ACLU and AAUP, Sustainable Delaware Ohio and Citizens' Climate Lobby. He was a tireless advocate for science, logic, and reason and is sorely missed. (See the Dec. 2016 issue of "Community Matters.")

Essayist John D'Agata at OWU (2/21)

American essayist and creative-writing prof. at the Univ. of Iowa John D'Agata is coming to OWU on Tues., Feb. 21. He will give a free writing salon at 12:10 pm in Sturges Hall (85 S. Sandusky St.) and a free reading at 4:10 pm in 301 Merrick Hall (65 S. Sandusky St.). D'Agata is the author and editor of a number of titles, among them "Halls of Fame," "About a Mountain," "The Life Span of a Fact," and "A New History of the Essay," a 3-volume trilogy. For more info, check the Wikipedia entry on him.

Delaware Community Coalition (2/21)

The next meeting of the Delaware Community Coalition (DCC) is scheduled for Tues., Feb. 21 (7 pm) at the Second Baptist Church (55 Ross St.). On the agenda are community updates, basketball updates, fundraising, SWCI events, SWCI's new scout program, and other items. – The DCC was founded in 2016 to help improve relations among Delaware's ethnic groups. DCC is a collaboration of churches, the police department, and various community groups. The goal is better communication and cooperation.

OWU Lecture on Human Rights (2/22)

Beth Simmons from the Univ. of Pennsylvania will be this year's featured speaker for the 28th Annual John Kennard Eddy Lecture on War and Politics on the OWU campus. Her presentation entitled "The Future of Human Rights" will take place on Wed., Feb. 22 (4:10-5 pm) in Benes Rooms A & B in the HWCC Campus Center. It is free & open to the public. Simmons is an authority on international relations and human rights. Among her publications is the award-winning 2009 book "Mobilizing for Human Rights."

Agronomy Workshop in Waldo (2/23)

The 2017 Agronomy Workshop & Expo will be held Thurs., Feb. 23 (9:30 am – 3 pm) at All Occasions Catering just south of Waldo (off US 23 N). The workshop explores various topics, including yield maximization, no-till strategies, soil health, conservation practices, and insect issues. The registration deadline is Feb. 17. The registration fee of \$10 includes morning refreshments, lunch, and materials. The program is sponsored by OSU Extension and other public entities and a good opportunity to network. For a reservation form, call the Delaware SWCD at 740-368-1821 or visit www.delawareswcd.org.

OWU Lecture on Human Trafficking (2/23)

Sponsored by OWU's Religion Dept., Dr. Paul C. H. Lim from Vanderbilt Univ. will discuss "Global Christianity and War on Human Trafficking: Snapshots from America, India, and Korea" on Thurs., Feb. 23 (7:30 pm) in 301 Merrick Hall, 65 S. Sandusky St. His talk represents the 2017 Merrick Lecture. It is free & open to the public.

Great Decisions: "Nuclear Security" (2/24)

"Great Decisions" continues with a talk by Dennis Laich, a retired major general, on "Nuclear Security." The presentation will be

Get Ready, Set, Grow! (2/25) – \$

"Get Ready, Set, Grow!" is an annual vegetable garden workshop organized jointly by the Delaware General Health District (DGHD) and the Delaware County Master Gardeners. The venue is the same as last year (Delaware Area Career Center North at 1610 State Rt. 521), but the workshop is held earlier than last year. It is scheduled for Sat., Feb. 25 (9 am – 1 pm). Registration starts at 8:30 am. The program offers a keynote speaker and a broad mix of gardening topics, incl. soil health & composting, plant problems, small-space & container gardening, controlling weeds, organic gardening, tomatoes, and herbs. However, there will be no expo this year. The admission fee is \$15. You may send your check to (or drop it off at) DGHD, 1 W. Winter St., by Feb. 18 or pay online (for a small fee) through www.eventbrite.com.

Sisters United Perform Butterfly Confessions (2/25)

For the fourth consecutive year, OWU's Sisters United will partner with Yetta Young and her "Butterfly Confessions" to perform this inspiring and uplifting stage play that promotes awareness about different issues as they pertain to black women and other women of color. The work blends humor and heartbreak with education and empowerment. The performance will be on Sat., Feb. 25 (7 pm) at the Studio Theatre within Chappelle Drama Center on the OWU campus. It is free & open to the public.

"March for Art" First Friday (3/3)

Main Street Delaware's "March for Art" (3/3) event includes 25 local galleries exhibiting artwork from Delaware City Schools. Galleries will be open from 6-9 pm. Come downtown to see what the young artists in our community have been creating! (The exhibits will remain up until the end of the month.) For more info, call 740-362-6050 or visit www.mainstreetdelawareohio.com.

Early Art & Fashion in Delaware County (3/6 – 4/28)

The Arts Castle is planning an exhibit entitled "All the Rage: Early Art & Fashion in Delaware County." It can be viewed at 190 W. Winter St. from March 6 through April 28. Exhibits are normally free & open to the public. Stay tuned for details.

CITY

City of Delaware

City Council meets Feb. 13 and 27. A special work session will be held Mon., Feb. 6 (6:30 pm), that focuses on the findings and recommendations of the Downtown Delaware Parking Study. All standing commissions, committees, and boards are back to their regular schedules, but it's possible for meetings to be canceled at the last minute due to a lack of agenda items or the presence of a quorum. The Planning Commission will meet on Wed., Feb. 1. On Thurs., Feb. 16, the Finance Committee meets at 4 pm. The Parking & Safety Committee is scheduled to meet on Mon., Feb. 20; Parks & Recreation on Tues., Feb. 21; and the Historic Preservation Commission on Wed., Feb. 22. Lastly, the Shade Tree Commission has its monthly meeting on Tues., Feb. 28. All meetings start at 7 pm (unless noted otherwise) and take place in City Hall (2nd floor) at 101 S. Sandusky St. The Hidden Valley Working Group is scheduled to have its third and final meeting on Wed., Feb. 8 (7 pm) at the golf course's club house before handing over its task-force recommendations. Members of City boards were recently reminded by Mayor Riggie to call or email if unable to attend.

Financial Health of Delaware

Ohio State Auditor Dave Yost released the 2015 Financial Health Indicator (FHI) report on 1/25. It scores 247 cities and Ohio's 88 counties on 17 financial indicators. Cities under 5,000 inhabitants are not included. 15 cities and 1 county meet the threshold for high stress, another 13 cities and 2 counties are within one indicator of high stress, including – somewhat surprisingly – Powell. The majority of cities (92%) and counties (82%) have at least one red (critical) or one yellow (cautionary) indicator, including the City of Delaware and

Delaware County. The City of Delaware is highly indebted (\$110 million) and pays \$3.6 million in interest every year (Indicator #12). However, Delaware is not alone in this respect. City officials are confident that the debt-to-revenue ratio is within manageable limits and that there is no reason for alarm. If asked, they would probably also state that the City's financial situation has significantly improved since 2015. The topic was briefly discussed at the 1/23 meeting of City Council, but there has been no in-depth report on it in the local press. Yost's full analysis is available at www.ohioauditor.gov/FHI.

Downtown Delaware Parking Study

The new Downtown Delaware Parking Study will be discussed during a special work session of City Council work on Mon., Feb. 6. The 65-page document was prepared by MKSK and has already been refined by an internal City of Delaware group and a steering committee made up of local business and property owners. It includes a 2-page executive summary as well as a list of short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations. It is interesting to note that the study is focused not only on automobiles; it also looks at the potential role DATA could play as a downtown circulator, the need for more bicycle parking, and better pedestrian connectivity (such as additional alley shortcuts and passageways) and safer intersection crossings. Whatever decisions the City of Delaware will make regarding the recommendations contained in the parking study, it knows that "a comprehensive and effective public-information program" is required to keep people informed about what the City is doing, why it is doing it, and how it will benefit residents and downtown Delaware.

Delaware's Community Promotions Fund

The Community Promotions Grant program was established to financially assist non-profit organizations that directly and positively impact the community, promote the City of Delaware, and enhance the quality of life. It is funded through revenues from the City's hotel & motel occupancy tax, typically around \$75,000 to \$80,000 per year. (The City does not collect from Airbnb and similar sharing-economy ventures at this point.) The 2017 recipients of a Community Promotions Grant are (in alphabetical order): Arts Castle (\$15,000), Central Ohio Symphony (\$10,000), Main Street Delaware (\$17,500), and the Second Ward Community Initiative (\$15,029). The amounts are the same as last year's, except that the grant for SWCI increased by \$1,529. In addition, the amount of \$35,000 was allocated to fireworks and \$15,000 for special events, which may include the Ironman 70.3 triathlon on July 30. The total amount for 2017 was \$108,529. – Last year, members of City Council used a point system to determine the most meritorious recipients of the Community Promotions Grant. It is our assumption that the same people and system were employed again to make this year's selection.

2017 Delaware Citizens' Academy

The City of Delaware has announced the schedule for the 2017 Citizens' Academy, held from February 9 through June 12. The nine sessions provide an in-depth look at the functions and operations of local government and are designed to help residents become more informed and involved. The schedule and application can be found on the City's website (www.delawareohio.net) under "Residents" and "City Hall." Participation is open to City residents age 18+ and those who work in the community. Attendance of all nine sessions is required for graduation. Participation is free, but limited to 20 attendees. The deadline to apply is Fri., February 5, 2017. All sessions are from 6-8 pm, unless otherwise noted. For more info, contact Lee Yoakum, Community Affairs Coordinator, 740-203-1015, email: lyoakum@delawareohio.net. Session 1: Thurs., Feb. 9 – City Manager, Session 2: Thurs., Feb. 23 – Planning, Session 3: Thurs., March 9 – Economic Development / City Attorney, Session 4: Thur., March 23 (6-8:30 pm) – Public Works / Transportation, Session 5: Sat., April 1 (9-11:30 am) – Fire, Session 6: Thurs., April 13 – Public Utilities, Session 7: Thurs., April 27 – Parks, Session 8: Thurs., May 11 – Police, Session 9: Thurs., May 25 – Finance, Graduation: Mon., June 12 (6:30 pm).

New Education Center at Water Treatment Plant

An Education Center is scheduled to open this spring at the City of Delaware's Water Treatment Facility at 3080 U.S. State Rt. 23 north of Delaware. The interactive center, in the works for years, will be open for tours to school groups, organizations, and residents

interested in learning more about water-related issues such as drinking water, waste water, water conservation, and the Olentangy Watershed. However, it is our understanding that for security reasons the facility will only be open for special occasions or at arranged times. As of Jan. 2017, no determination has been made yet whether or not to permanently close the adjacent Riverview Park, which is isolated and gets little traffic. It is interesting to note, however, that it is no longer listed in the 2016 City of Delaware Park Index.

City Council Likely to Ban Exotic Circus Animals

On Jan. 9, City Council held a public hearing on Ordinance 16-110, an ordinance relating to circuses. Many people voiced their opposition to the practice of circuses to use wild, exotic, and dangerous animals for entertainment purposes. To gain dominance over animals such as elephants and tigers, brute force has to be used in the form of chains, cages, whips, electric shocks, and bull hooks. Several examples of mistreated animals that killed their trainers were cited. USDA (APHIS) oversight of circus animals is spotty and ineffective, several people noted. For that reason, they would have preferred a complete ban on all animals in circuses. Only one person spoke up in favor of the "clean fun" that circuses provide. Perhaps even more important than the issue of animal welfare was the issue of public safety and legal liability. A spooked wild animal on the loose would pose a grave public danger for which local law enforcement would be unprepared. Police Chief Bruce Pijanowski stated that the weapons that his officers normally carry would be ineffective against pachyderms, bears, or large cats. Council member George Hellinger sagely asked, why take the risk if you can view plenty of animals of the same species a few miles down the road in the Columbus Zoo? Since a couple of City Council members were not present at the Jan. 23 meeting, the vote on Ordinance 16-110 was delayed until Feb. 13. If the City of Delaware decides to pass an ordinance that bans wild and exotic animals, it may be the first community in Ohio to do so.

Dog Park Is Temporarily Closed

Delaware's dog park on the city's east side is indefinitely closed after it experienced weather-related difficulties. Use and rain have caused the ground to become a mudhole. The park may reopen once the ground is either frozen or dried up. It may close again later in spring to allow new grass to grow. – For many dog parks, this is a perennial problem. Some rotate between sections, allowing areas to recover. Some have tried mulch, which did not seem to help much. Artificial turf or indoor dog parks (or dog parks with roofs) are another option.

City Council and the Ohio Revised Code

The Ohio Revised Code (ORC) stipulates that public bodies (such as City Council) must meet in well-advertised open meetings. Resolutions or ordinances not adopted in public meetings are invalid. However, if you follow the deliberations of Delaware's City Council, you will have noticed that a lot of business is conducted behind closed doors in so-called "executive sessions." The ORC permits the practice provided certain conditions are met, as outlined in Section 121.22 (G). Exceptions are possible for personnel matters (1), the purchase of property (2), legal proceedings (3), collective bargaining (4), matters required to be kept confidential as mandated by state or federal law (5), security and emergency issues (6), hospital trade secrets (7), and requests for economic-development assistance that involve trade secrets (8). By and large, City Council is in compliance with the *letter* of the ORC. However, the *spirit* of the ORC suggests, "This section shall be liberally construed to require public officials to take official action and to conduct all deliberations upon official business only in open meetings, unless the subject matter is specifically excepted by law." However, City Council routinely discusses subject matter in executive session that could easily be debated in public meetings. There has not been a City Council meeting in memory that did not involve an executive session. Rather than the exception, executive sessions have become the norm. They are now part of every agenda, regardless whether or not there is anything to discuss in executive session. Often, they are truncated or canceled altogether. – We are not suggesting that City Council is involved in shady activities it wishes to shield from public scrutiny. We view it more as a public-relations problem than a substantive issue. However, in our view the whole framework should be revisited because of the negative public

perception that these "secret" meetings behind closed doors convey, as evidenced in various statements made to newspapers, on Facebook, and to City Council directly. We understand that there are personnel matters, trade secrets, and security issues that cannot be divulged for legal and security reasons. But in our view, City Council, when in doubt, should err on the side of disclosure and transparency, as recommended by the ORC.



Mogami River, Japan

Sakata (Japan), Delaware's Sister City

According to Wikipedia, Sakata is a seaport city of about 105,000 located in the Yamagata Prefecture in the northern half of Japan's main island, Honshu. The Mogami River flows through it. The main economic branches seem to be fishing, manufacturing, electronics, and trade. On the cultural side of things, Sakata has temples, historic buildings, art museums, parks, and various other attractions. The Japanese love trees, and the city is proud of its zelkovas and cherry trees. Sakata is one of Delaware's sister cities, and in April Delaware will send a delegation to visit the port city for a 10-day tour (April 13-22). The delegation will include members of City Council, but – for the record – no taxpayer money is used for the trip. The other active sister-city relationship Delaware maintains is with the German town of Baumholder. The partnership with Omutninsk in Russia is currently dormant, although it could be revived.

Martin Luther King Jr. Celebrated

Some 400 people attended the 2017 MLK Breakfast at OWU on Mon., 1/16, one of the largest turnouts ever. Over 30 groups co-sponsored the event, including the two top political parties. Rev. Dr. Valerie Bridgeman from MTSO was the featured speaker. MLK's last published book was devoted to the topic of community, but Dr. Bridgeman acknowledged that in the age of Trump answers are hard to come by. Many people fear the new administration. According to published AP reports, Trump himself did not publicly participate in any MLK observances. Instead, he picked a Twitter fight with Rep. John Lewis, one of the revered and iconic leaders of the Civil Rights movement and recipient of an honorable degree from Ohio Wesleyan University. Under the circumstances, unity remains an elusive goal.

Delaware Community Coalition Continues to Meet

The Delaware Community Coalition (DCC) was founded in 2016 to help improve relations among Delaware's ethnic groups. DCC is a collaboration of churches, the police department, and various community groups. The goal is better communication and cooperation. The objectives include trust and relation-building as well as maintaining an on-going dialogue between police and non-white groups, especially in the Second Ward. A specific initiative is focused on working with minority youth and to enable them to successfully compete for law-enforcement positions (or other positions) later in life. The DCC meets on the third Tuesday of every month. The next meeting is thus scheduled for Tues., Feb. 21 (7 pm) at the Second Baptist Church at 55 Ross St. in Delaware. On the agenda are community updates, basketball updates, fundraising, SWCI programming & events, SWCI's new scout program, and other items. Future meetings will take place March 21, April 18, May 16, June 20, and July 18. However, the venue is not always the same, so check with Rev. Tracey Sumner, Sr. (delawarecommunitycoalition@outlook.com) or other members of the group.

Turning Point

Delaware is the most populous county in the State of Ohio without a domestic-violence shelter for women. It has a designated shelter for dogs, but none for victims of domestic violence. However, that will soon change. Marion-based Turning Point announced plans in 2015 to renovate the existing building complex at 500 (?) N. Liberty St., between US 23 N and the Delaware County Fairground(s), and to convert it into such a facility. Executive Director Paula Roller has recently announced that her group has thus far raised

\$1.1 million of the required \$2.3 million. Funds have mostly come from individual donors rather than from corporations or foundations. The project is strongly supported by local law enforcement, which has contributed to fundraising. Roller's goal is to open the facility in the fall of 2017, but additional funds from corporate sponsors would make a fall opening more likely. Local businesses, Central Ohio foundations, and public agencies (incl. Delaware County and the City of Delaware) should make it a point to support the domestic-violence shelter in whatever way they can afford to make it a reality soon. More info is available at www.turningpoint6.org/delawareshelter.

"Great Decisions" Lecture Series

"Great Decision," the free community discussion series on U.S. foreign policy, begins Feb 17 and ends April 7. Corinne Lyman and Barb Tull seem to be the main organizers. A total of 8 presentations are planned, covering various areas of the globe (Europe, Asia, and Latin America) as well as topics such as trade, oil, and nuclear security. The speakers are professors or former generals, government employees, or consultants. All Great Decisions discussions will be held every Friday at 12 pm noon at William Street United Methodist Church (UMC) at 28 W. William St. on the following dates: 2/17, 2/24, 3/3, 3/10, 3/17, 3/24, 3/31, and 4/7. Attendees are free to bring a brown-bag lunch; complimentary tea or coffee is provided. The talks are free & open to the public.

DelawaREADS Program Returns

The Delaware County District Library has chosen the graphic novel "Drowned City" by Don Brown as the book for the DelawaREADS program this spring. The novel tells the grim but riveting story of Hurricane Katrina that flooded New Orleans in 2005. Teens and high-school students from the Delaware City, Buckeye Valley, and Olentangy Local schools will be reading and discussing the award-winning book. Various additional events involving Cajun food are also planned. Don Brown himself will visit each Delaware County school district and is scheduled to speak at the Delaware Main Library (Public Library) on Wed., March 15 at 7 pm. For more info, visit www.delawarelibrary.org.

Citizens' Climate Lobby

Four members of Delaware's Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) chapter attended the Environmental Professionals Network's January 11 breakfast. The event's theme was global warming, and keynote speaker Dr. Lonnie Thompson of OSU's Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center and the Dept. of Earth Science, discussed "Climate Change: The Evidence and Our Options." Thompson is a researcher of national and international significance, and what he says carries weight. – The Delaware CCL chapter meets at 11:45 am on the **second** Saturday of each month at First Presbyterian Church, 73 W. Winter St., for a local meeting and the monthly national CCL phone call. Hundreds of chapters across the nation and the world sign in to listen to the call. Chapters are taken off mute to say goodbye at the call's end, an amazing reminder of how many CCL members are working to build the political will to bring about climate solutions. For more info, call 740-363-3239, email delawareoh@citizensclimatelobby.org, or search online for national Citizens' Climate Lobby.

NNA Starts Health Initiative

"Blue zones" are geographic hotspots in the world where a disproportionate number of people live to be 100 or more. Globetrotter Dan Buettner has studied the phenomenon in a best-selling book series. Delaware's Northwest Neighborhood Association (NNA) has now started a new reading and study group that focuses on the third book of the series, "Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World's Healthiest People" (2015). If there is sufficient interest at a later point, the group plans to consider and adopt changes in lifestyle and diet that would improve health and longevity in the neighborhood. If you wish to participate in the project, please send an email to nnareads@gmail.com. To find out which other American communities have adopted "Blue Zones" principles, visit www.bluezones.com.

Benny Shoults and His "Frame Artistry" Workshop

Local resident Benny Shoults has worked in the picture-framing business for over 30 years. Over time, he has created or

restored thousands of wood or metal frames for clients throughout the U.S., but mainly in Central Ohio. Benny grew up in Columbus, Ohio, and attended Columbus College of Art and Design. He lives in Delaware where he is a member of local organizations such as Main Street Delaware, the NNA, the Arts Castle, and the Historical Society. His specialty is custom-framing of pictures, but he also has created a fair number of handcrafted shadow boxes – vitrines (glass showcases) that contain things like religious items, sports memorabilia, musical instruments, or toys. He says that about 75% of his orders are devoted to new creations, but he also restores damaged frames, replaces broken glass, and cleans dirty pictures upon request. Benny takes great pride in his artisanal work, which is guaranteed, and devotes loving attention to each individual piece. His work is of such outstanding professional quality that it has been exhibited in local galleries. He says that a typical job takes about 7 to 10 days, depending on the time of year. However, if an order needs to be expedited, there is often some discretion. To look at some of his frames, visit www.frameartistry.net. He has many more samples at his home and workshop at 176 W. Lincoln Ave. References are available upon request. Benny is available for personal consultations by appointment only. You may email him at benny@frameartistry.net



Above the Light: Drone Photography & Videography

One of the local businesses at the Bishop Backers event on Jan. 21 was Above the Light (ATL), which uses drone aviation for a wide variety of services. One of their specialties is aerial real-estate photography and videography. Drones (aka quadcopters) can also be used for inspections of a wide variety of things – buildings, roofs, cell towers, bridges, trees, dams, farms, fences, wires, and so on. Another typical use may be for family events such as weddings or birthday parties. ATL has recently expanded its infrared capabilities. Examples of ATL's portfolio of high-quality work can be seen on their website (www.abovethelight.com) or on their Facebook page. You will recognize many sites within the City of Delaware and Delaware County. ATL is fully insured and FAA-licensed. The drones are professionally piloted, and the company has never lost one. Also noteworthy – ATL does have a strict mission policy and will never intentionally invade someone's privacy. Consultations are free, and the pricing is customized. You may call [740-417-2381](tel:740-417-2381) or send an email to abovethelightphotography@gmail.com.

Faculty Diversity at OWU

In the beginning, Ohio Wesleyan employed "none but professors of religion," and they were all male and white. The student body was similarly homogeneous. Obviously, OWU has come a long way since then. There exists now considerable diversity among students and faculty compared to 1842. But is the university diverse enough? OWU is painfully aware that it, like many other colleges and universities, remains a predominantly white institution (PWI) as far as faculty and staff of color is concerned. At many colleges and universities, non-white groups remain underrepresented compared to the student body and the population as a whole. At many institutions of higher learning, international faculty members are bullied and silenced. LGBT folks suffer from overt and covert discrimination. Women are routinely denied tenure. Non-conformist academic scholarship is rejected and ridiculed as inferior. Tenure and promotion has everything to do with how well a faculty member is socially and culturally accepted, supported, and mentored by departmental colleagues and little to do with the actual substance, quality, and relevance of someone's research. A person who is not a good "fit" or "match" is either not hired in the first place or sent packing soon. Thus, personnel decisions are essentially meaningless popularity contests. The system almost guarantees the continued pernicious cycle of underrepresentation. – At OWU, the latest of several self-studies and outside consultants is a report by Dr. Allison Williams from Denison University, submitted in December 2016. It concludes that the lack of a critical mass of faculty of color and international backgrounds restricts OWU's goal to prepare its students for global citizenship and

leadership. Underrepresented faculty see themselves excluded from a whole smorgasbord of things: acceptance, mentoring, resources, grants, tenure, promotion, merit, committee work, and awards. Instead, they experience marginalization, isolation, and alienation. Their different viewpoints are often questioned, challenged, and rejected by both colleagues and students, resulting in mixed evaluations. The privilege and authority of white faculty members, on the other hand, is widely accepted. Instead of promoting educational achievement, the prevailing campus climate "deters" it, according to the report. The faculty-personnel committee, in particular, bears much of the responsibility for this unfortunate situation. Women and minorities value compassion and community, and they have a more person-centered approach. They frequently take on nurturing roles such as student advising and mentoring as well as departmental service, but none of that is valued much when it comes to tenure, promotion, and merit. On the other hand, white males who refuse to perform service work because it takes time away from research normally fare just fine. Both the evaluation and appeals process are "cloaked in secrecy," and "a sense of fairness [...] is currently lacking." Dr. Williams' report makes numerous recommendations to change the situation for the better. Let's hope that this time around OWU is serious about its commitment to diversity and willing to commit the necessary resources. A fresh start is needed, at OWU and other universities.

International Queer Film Festival at OWU

The LGBTQ community is celebrated, but also persecuted, in many parts of the world. Homosexuality is still widely considered a crime, sometimes even punishable by death. A new kind of film festival at OWU wants to shed light on the ways gays and lesbians live in other countries, incl. Cuba, Greece, India, Iran, Romania, and Thailand. OWU's first queer film festival starts Feb. 1 and ends April 4. The February films are "Viva" (2/1), "Naz & Maalik" (2/8), "Xenia" (2/13), and "Beyond the Hills" (2/23). The films are shown at 7 pm in the Benes Rooms of HWCC Campus Center. The film festival is free & open to the public, and popcorn awaits you.

Two Exhibits at the Ross Art Museum

OWU's Ross Art Museum at 60 S. Sandusky St. has two exhibits at the moment, both of which are running from Jan. 17 through Apr. 2. Carol Boram-Hays of the Columbus College of Art & Design has an interesting show ("Accumulated errors") that uses reclaimed industrial wires, cables, and pipes to produce intriguing sculptures. And Louise Captein of Otterbein Univ. has an exhibit of colorful oil paintings and collages entitled "From One Thing to Another." The museum is handicap-accessible and always free & open to the public.

Rutherford B. Hayes Exhibit in Fremont

The Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library and Museums in Fremont is opening a new exhibit on Fri., Feb. 3, that is mostly devoted to Rutherford B. Hayes, the 19th American President, who was born in Delaware. Entitled "Presidential Pop Culture: The Art of Influencing Perception" is open daily and will run through Oct. 8. The exhibit explores how Hayes and his wife Lucy Webb Hayes were portrayed before, during, and after his one term in office (1877-1881) in political cartoons, memorabilia, toys, music, and later in movies and other forms of pop culture. Admission is included with the price of a museum visit, so while there you may also wish to explore the estate, mansion, library, museum, park, and Hayes' grave. Fremont is located north of Delaware, close to Lake Erie. For more info, visit www.rbhayes.org. – Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893) is, of course, Delaware's most famous son, but in 1926 the good citizens of our fair town demolished his birthplace on E. William St.; it is today the site of a gas station.

The Photography of Ellen Arnold

OWU professors have many hidden talents. Among them are artists and musicians. Others are avid gardeners or expert bird-watchers. There are marathon runners and knitters. And there is Dr. Ellen Arnold who joined OWU in 2010 and is currently an associate professor who teaches medieval history. Whenever she can, she travels around the world and takes photographs that depict people and their natural and urban environs. She has had shows in various

galleries over the years, but most of her colleagues and students may not have been aware of this hidden talent until now. That is likely to change with the opening of her most recent exhibit in Delaware at Fresh Start Café & Bakery at 24 N. Sandusky St. An exhibit reception took place Jan 13. The 16 photographs look almost like abstract paintings. They show various patterns at the intersection of nature and culture where the boundaries are fluid. The exhibit will be up for two months, until March. You may learn more about Ellen Arnold's travels and art by visiting her website, www.efarnold.com. This spring, Dr. Arnold is scheduled to take a group of students on a tour through Germany and France to study medieval cathedrals. She is sure to return with more great photography.

Stratford Ecological Center

Spring is not far off when people get ready for the maple-sugar harvest. Stratford Ecological Center at 3083 Liberty Rd. is offering two Maple-Sugar Tours on Sat., Feb. 18 and 25 (10 am – 1 pm). Join Stratford's experienced sugar cookers for a hands-on experience in the sugar bush. Learn how to tap a maple tree, help collect sap, and experience the evaporation process in the sugar shack. Free tours begin every half hour from 10 am to noon. Register at www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org. – A Maple-Sugar Pancake Breakfast with whole-wheat pancakes, Stratford sausage, and local maple syrup is planned for Sat., March 4 (8 am – 1 pm). The cost for the breakfast is \$10 per adult, \$5 per child (ages 2-12). Advanced registration is required. For the many other upcoming Stratford programs, visit www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org.

The Story of Lyla

Lyla, a 9-month-old Golden Retriever, bolted from her owner on Fri., 1/6, after being startled by a dump truck. Eventually, she was spotted by multiple people some two miles away on London Rd. area around Speedway and Oak Grove Cemetery, still dragging her leash behind her. There, she hung around for several days. Maybe she had discovered shelter or a food source. But she remained scared and skittish, and no one was able to catch her. Fortunately, there was a happy ending to the story. On Jan. 12, 6 days later, she was found and rescued by a college student and her boyfriend near the YMCA. At that time, she no longer had her collar and leash, but the students recognized Lyla from Facebook. She had lost weight and was filthy, but alive and well despite the rigors of extremely cold nights, heavy city traffic, and no reliable source of water and food. It takes a resilient dog to accomplish this. Just a few days later, she was out walking again with her owners. – But this is not only a story about a dog, this is also a story about people. Once neighbors and people around the city heard of Lyla's plight, their hearts were moved and their minds got creative. Despite busy work schedules and family obligations, neighbors spent hours walking and driving, listening and looking for Lyla. They produced additional posters at their own expense and put them up everywhere where people would see them. Social media such as Facebook, Nextdoor, Pet FBI, and others were humming with alerts, descriptions, and updates. Due to the substantial reward offered (\$1,000), there were also individuals among them who helped primarily for financial reasons, but that's ok too. One man used his dog in a vain attempt to track Lyla. It was remarkable how the entire community came together in this search-and-rescue mission. There is widespread political anger and resentment in the country at the moment, so it was wonderful to see that people are still perfectly capable of compassion and empathy. The story of Lyla is also a story of hope for the rest of us.

COUNTY & CENTRAL OHIO

DACC Consolidation in Limbo

The planned consolidation of the Delaware Area Career Center (DACC), a \$45-million project, is in question. Voters in Delaware County approved the DACC's renewal levy in 2015 by a wide margin of 10,644 votes. However, students who live on the edges of Franklin, Marion, Morrow, and Union County also attend the DACC, but the levy did not appear on the ballots of 1,026 property owners and voters in these counties. The Delaware County Board of Elections had failed to submit the necessary paperwork. As a result, the Ohio Dept. of Taxation ceased tax collections beyond Jan. 1, 2017 altogether.

Without the expected revenue of \$7.1 million in 2017, contractors cannot be reimbursed and construction will stop. DACC has appealed to the Ohio Supreme Court to intervene and to demand that the Ohio Dept. of Taxation begin tax collection in the five counties. However, it seems problematic and illegal to impose a tax on voters who were never given the chance to approve or reject the levy, so it might take a while to sort things out. It seems equally problematic and illegal to ask only Delaware County voters to pay for the project from which residents of other counties also benefit. In the meantime, it is almost certain that construction will have to be halted temporarily.



AEP to Build New Transmission Line

AEP Ohio has announced construction of a 17-mile-long transmission line in Delaware County. The 69-kilovolt line will affect the Berlin, Brown, Delaware, and Troy townships. The company will install 85-foot steel poles instead of the large towers that are normally used in rural areas. They will be placed in a 50-foot right-of-way zone. Construction of the \$25-million line is slated to begin in spring 2017 and scheduled to be completed by summer 2018. The public was invited to a Project Open House on Tues., Jan. 17 at the YMCA Delaware Community Center. More about the project, incl. a map, can be found online at www.aepohio.com/delawaretransmissionline. – While it is true that the existing power grid is not robust and prone to outages, high-voltage transmission lines are controversial for many reasons. You definitely don't want to live directly under the electromagnetic field, and they may negatively impact property values. Also, the 2018 completion date may be overly optimistic. The company already owns some of the land it needs, but AEP representative Vikki Michalski admitted that AEP is still working with landowners to purchase the rest. If eminent domain is involved, there could be delays in the construction plans. In addition, some residents say that these contracts with AEP specify 65-foot wood power poles, not 85-foot steel power poles with larger diameters.

United Way Changes Funding Model

In 2016, United Way of Central Ohio took a whole new approach how it allocates money. Henceforth the "singular goal" is to move the needle on poverty. Central Ohio's poverty level remains high, and "every dollar is focused on reducing poverty" from now on, according to a United Way spokesperson. Instead of 147 member agencies, only 59 programs will benefit from United Way this cycle. Unfortunately that means that 88 nonprofits that enjoyed United Way's financial support in the past will have to rethink their budgets and figure out how to keep existing programs afloat. Among them are the Boy Scouts of America, the Central Ohio Diabetes Association, the Columbus Urban League, the Mental Health America of Franklin County, the YMCA, and similar member agencies. The YMCA of Central Ohio is closing its Gahanna center and changing hours at other facilities. Even the Children's Hunger Alliance was on the chopping block, which seems to make little sense given the new focus on poverty reduction. To alleviate the transition, United Way provided limited funding to six long-term member agencies so that they didn't use large chunks of their funding all at once, among them the Columbus Literacy Council. Press reports were somewhat vague on which current or new programs benefit from the new model and receive more money, but among them are programs that provide "care coordinators" and more opportunities to impoverished neighborhoods in Linden and on Columbus' south side. United Way of Central Ohio is optimistic that the new approach will yield more effective solutions in the long term. At this point, there is no clear sense how a donation to United Way of Central Ohio would help the residents of Delaware County and the City of Delaware. We will explore that in a future article. For details and various short videos on United Way, visit www.liveunitedcentralohio.org.

Columbus Becoming a Sanctuary City

Columbus is on its way to become a "sanctuary city," joining hundreds of other communities, churches, and colleges nationwide.

While the exact definition of the word remains unclear, Mayor Ginther announced that he will sign an executive order that bans unconstitutional police arrests or the denial of city services based on a person's immigration status. He also indicated that city resources will not be used to perform federal immigration policy, which is costly and often subject to litigation. In addition, City Council is planning to create a legal-defense fund to help immigrants and refugees. Cleveland's City Council has announced similar plans.

Homelessness Is Growing in Columbus

Wed., Jan. 25, was the annually mandated "point in time" day when thousands of social workers and volunteers across the nation counted the homeless. They traveled to shelters, soup kitchens, tent camps, parks, and bridges. Politicians say that homelessness has decreased in recent years, but every statistic that we have seen indicates that the opposite is true. In Franklin County (which includes Columbus), the number has risen by 19.6% during the last 5 years, from 1,434 in 2012 to 1,715 in 2016. The figure is most likely understated because many homeless do not wish to be found and counted for a variety of reasons. Some are in denial, have mental issues, fear arrest, or are afraid their children will be taken from them. Homelessness is not just a problem that affects alcoholics or drug addicts. It can happen to anyone as a result of illness, disability, divorce, or job loss. Among the homeless are also children and even entire families.

"Trees in Trouble," a 2015 Documentary

"Trees in Trouble: Saving America's Urban Forests" (2015) is a 27-minute PBS documentary produced and directed by Cincinnati-based filmmaker Andrea Torrice. It describes the importance of urban forests and tells the story of Cincinnati's response to the threat of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) that wiped out millions of city trees in recent years. The film describes the steps Cincinnati took to save its urban forest for future generations. It also explores the rich history of urban forestry in the U.S. and new research that connects human health to the health of trees. The educational film is appropriate for all ages and especially suited for K-12 schools. It was recently edited to include exciting and ground-breaking new research by Jennifer Koch, a research biologist working at the Northern Research Station on Main Rd. just north of Delaware, which is part of USDA's Forest Service. Koch is a member of an international team that is working on producing hybrid species that show resistance to invasive species such as the EAB.

EMS Citizens' Academy Returns

After a 5-year hiatus, the EMS Citizens' Academy is returning to Delaware County. It was last offered in 2012. The 10-week program begins March 21 and runs through May 23. Each 2-hour session will explore a different facet of the Delaware County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) department, incl. Homeland Security and the SWAT team. Participation is limited to 12 persons. They must pre-register and be 18 or older. Presumably they will have to go through a background check as well, which is standard practice. For more info, visit the website of Delaware County EMS, www.delcoems.org.

IKEA Opens This Summer

The new IKEA store at the Intersection of I-71 and Polaris Parkway, which is still in Delaware County, plans to open in summer of 2017. A firm date has not yet been set. This will be the second IKEA store in Ohio. The layout of the 354,000-square-foot store will be similar to those of the other 43 IKEA furniture stores in the U.S.: there will be a large showroom area, a marketplace area, and a self-serve warehouse. In addition, there will be a 450-seat restaurant that serves Swedish and American fare, a bistro, a children's corner, and baby-care facilities. The store is built with recycled materials, uses LED skylights, and half of the rooftop will be covered with solar panels, one of the largest rooftop solar-panel arrays in the state. The store hours are Mon. through Sat. from 10 am - 9 pm and on Sun. from 10 am - 8 pm.

Columbus Home & Garden Show (2/18-26) – \$

The Columbus Home & Garden Show is renowned for its broad spectrum of options for indoor and outdoor living. Appearing live are Pete Nelson (2/18-19) and Drew & Jonathan Scott (2/25). The

2017 spring show will be held from Feb. 18-26 at the Ohio Expo Center, 717 E. 17th Ave. in Columbus. It is closed Tues., but open until 8 pm on most other days. Tickets are \$13 on site, \$11 online. A \$3 discount voucher is available at Lowe's. Parking is \$5 (cash). For updates & details, visit www.columbushomeandgardenshow.com.

Summit on Urban Agriculture (3/25) – \$

The 2017 Urban Agriculture & Community Garden Summit, "We Dig Ohio," will take place on Sat., March 25 (9 am – 4:30 pm) at the Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens at 1777 E. Broad St. in Columbus. The one-day summit focuses on the growing urban-agriculture and community-garden movement. The schedule hasn't been finalized yet, but in 2016 the program included a dozen guest-speakers and numerous workshops on topics such as permaculture, pollinators, integrated pest management, raising chickens, community gardening best practices, and many more. The cost is \$60 and \$45 for students with valid IDs. Pre-registration is required. For info, visit www.fpconservatory.org, do a web search on "We Dig Ohio 2017," or call 614-715-8034.

Arnold Sports Festival (3/2-5) – \$

The 2017 Arnold Sports Festival & Arnold Classic bodybuilding championships, along with the Arnold Fitness Expo, will take place March 2-5 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center and Ohio Expo Center in Columbus. Now in its 29th year, the festival and expo attracts an estimated 200,000 people (incl. many from Delaware) who watch about 18,000 athletes compete in 70 sports and events. The accompanying expo features more than 900 booths dedicated to sports equipment, apparel, and nutrition. It will be held March 3-5. Lastly, there is the Arnold 5K on Sun., March 5, which starts at 9:15 am at the north end of the Greater Convention Center. Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door. For more info, visit www.arnoldsportsfestival.com.

BIA Parade of Homes 2017

Chesire Woods in Berkshire Township (Delaware County) has been chosen as the venue for the 2017 Parade of Homes of the Building Industry Association (BIA) of Central Ohio. The development area is located near Sunbury, along Rome Corners Rd. south of Chesire and east of I-71. The homes will range between \$500,000 and \$700,000 in price, which is lower than last year's price points. The 2017 BIA Parade of Homes will be held Sept. 2-17.

STATE

Ohio's GOP Has New Chairperson

Jane Timken has replaced Matt Borges as chairperson of the Ohio GOP. In this very public proxy battle between Gov. John Kasich and President Donald Trump, Timken was backed by Trump while Borges was backed by Kasich. This is a victory for the Trump camp and "a punch in the stomach" for Kasich. Timken works as an attorney in Canton (Stark County) and is the wife of Tim Timken, the CEO of TimkenSteel, and a member of one of Ohio's wealthiest and most influential families. The Timkens have contributed "hundreds of thousands of dollars to Republican candidates over the past several years," according to the "Columbus Dispatch. The newspaper also reported that Timken has "the ear of the president." She is the first woman to hold the office, but critics see it as another example of industrial interests having an outsized influence on politics. The risk for conflicts of interest is great. The Ohio Ethics Committee (assuming it survives) will be busy.

Bleak Future for Social Services in Ohio

The State of Ohio has finished work on the next budget proposal, and the situation is not encouraging. Revenues are below expectation for the sixth month in a row, and there is a budget deficit. In addition to financial pressures, there are political pressures to reduce or eliminate programs. One target is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its Air Pollution Control division. The Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services is facing cutbacks in the areas of mental health & disabilities, suicide prevention, and drug courts. Despite the fact that more people are dying of drug overdoses in Ohio than in any other state in the nation, no new monies will be

allocated. The Dept. of Job and Family Services says it needs more money for subsidized child care and unemployment compensation, but under the circumstances is not likely to get it. Public Defender Tim Young, whose office represents indigent defendants, reports that he has lost a third of his staff since 2000 because of a lack of funding and warns that more staff reductions could be coming. The bottom line is: social and environmental services as well as public schools will continue to be losers under Republican leadership. They are GOP targets, not GOP priorities. The underinvestment is by design.

"Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Resistance"

After 2008/09, a small but vocal group, the TEA Party, managed to influence and shape the politics of the nation. A new guide, produced by former congressional staffers, is now available based on their strategy and tactics, "Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda." It can be found on the Internet and either printed out (26 pages) or downloaded. The guide has a partisan slant, but regardless whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, the document is a useful instrument to communicate with your one congressional House representative and your two senators (Members of Congress / MoCs). In the case of Delaware County, that's Rep. Pat Tiberi (Congressional District 12) and Senators Sherrod Brown (D) and Rob Portman (R). (Rep. Jim Jordan represents Congressional District 4, west of Delaware County.) A congressional map tool helps you find the boundaries of the districts in each state (www.govtrack.us/congress/members/map). A list of the members of Congress, including the senators, is available at www.callmycongress.com. There, you will find the official websites and contact addresses of your three MoCs. Their voting history can be viewed at www.votesmart.org. And you may research their biggest campaign contributors at www.opensecrets.org. Loaded with all that intel, you and your group can then call or visit the public offices of these gentlemen (or ladies, as the case may be), ask pointed questions, and make your views heard. The practical guide gives you clear instructions of how to communicate with the MoCs efficiently and effectively, for example when your representative is attempting to deflect or dodge an issue. By the way, anything they and their staff tell you is public information that can be shared widely. – Of course, engaged citizens are not limited to working with members of the House and Senate. There is much that can be done on the local and state level as well.

Governor Kasich Writes New Book

Ohio Governor John Kasich has written a new book, "Two Paths: America Divided or United." It will be published April 25 by St. Martin's Press. Reportedly Kasich wrote the narrative himself instead of employing a ghost writer. The book is part memoir and part a plea for unity, "honesty, integrity, personal responsibility, faith, humility, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance" and similar values, according to the "Columbus Dispatch." Instead of fear, Kasich offers hope. Obviously, Kasich is a politician whose style is different from that of President Trump. Some observers believe that the book, a plea for "a higher path," is intended to position the term-limited governor as a White House alternative come 2020.

GateHouse Media in Ohio

GateHouse Media (based in Pittsford, New York) operates in more than 520 markets in 35 states. It owns over 125 daily and over 3,100 weekly papers as well as 530 local websites. Recently, GateHouse acquired a number of additional dailies (sp?), other publications, and websites in northeastern Ohio from the Dix family. These publications serve all or part of 13 of Ohio's 88 counties. The sales price was \$21.3 million. – Is it time to worry about a potential press monopoly of GateHouse Media (as well as Gannett Company) in Ohio, which would limit the availability of other viewpoints? If the current trend toward consolidation and centralization continues, that is a distinct possibility, according to Dr. Paul Kostyu, a journalism professor at Ohio Wesleyan University. In Central Ohio, the "Columbus Dispatch" is the largest newspaper in the GateHouse family. In addition, the Dispatch Media Group serves various websites, 25 weekly papers, and magazines such as "Columbus Monthly." The availability of alternative viewpoints, unorthodox thinking, innovative proposals, etc., is already restricted.

"Hillbilly Elegy" Author Returns to Ohio

The young author of "Hillbilly Elegy" (2016), J. D. (James David) Vance, has announced plans to relocate to Ohio and to create a non-profit educational organization to help people with "hillbilly" backgrounds to escape ignorance, poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Vance, a registered Republican, will build "Our Ohio Renewal" with the help of Jai Chabria, a former advisor to Governor John Kasich. The focus will be on upward mobility. Vance grew up in Kentucky (Jackson) and southwestern Ohio (Middletown), and has degrees from OSU and Yale. He and his wife currently live in California.

OEFFA Meets in Dayton (2/9-11)

The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) is holding its 38th annual conference from Thurs. through Sat., Feb. 9-11, in Dayton. Note this year's new and bigger venue (Dayton Convention Center, 22 E. 5th St.) for Ohio's largest sustainable food and farm convention. Typically, there are about 100 workshops and 100 speakers on all facets of sustainable agriculture, gardening, food, and cooking, but this year's event promises to be even larger. The keynote speakers are Robyn O'Brien (author of "The Unhealthy Truth") and Minnesota's Jim Riddle (organic farmer and lecturer). Plus, there are various pre-conference programs, a trade show, seed swaps, book sales, entertainment, food vendors, child care, etc. This is a great conference, but participation is not cheap. A one-day adult ticket is \$90 for members, \$125 for non-members. We are told that one way to get in for free is by volunteering. For details, visit www.oeffa.org. Online registration is now closed.

Woodland, Water & Wildlife Conference (3/1) – \$

Mark your calendars for the 2017 Woodland, Water & Wildlife Conference on Wed., March 1, in Mansfield, Ohio. It will be held at the Mid-Ohio Conference Center at 890 W. Fourth St. The program is sponsored by the OSU extension College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences. The deadline for the early-bird registration (\$60) is Feb. 14. After that, the cost is \$80. Registration deadline is Feb. 22. Participants can choose among concurrent workshops. Topics include human-wildlife conflict, fisheries, invasive species, aquatic invasive species, biodiversity, geospatial data, stormwater, spiders, bioreactors, stream and woodland restoration, pollinators, migratory birds, soil basics, and more. For more info and a registration form, visit www.woodlandstewards.osu.edu.

Ohio City Provisions Opens in Cleveland

A new store opened in Cleveland last December, Ohio City Provisions. It is located at 3208 Loraine Ave. on the city's west side and open daily from 10 am to 7 pm. What's unique about the store is that it only sells locally sourced items grown or raised in Ohio. Nothing is imported from abroad or other states. Many of the products come from Amish Country where owner Trevor Clatterbuck maintains the 200-acre Wholesome Valley Farms in Wilmot, Holmes County. There, he raises cattle, hogs, turkeys, and chickens. According to the website (www.ohiocityprovisions.com), the store sells all kinds of produce, high-value meats, dairy, eggs, cheeses, seasonal vegetables and fruit, canned goods, jams, honey, baked bread, and so on. A limited menu of grab-and-go food is also available. All products are organic, non-GMO, free of antibiotics and hormones. The meats are pasture-raised. Next time you travel to Cleveland, check out the store. – Ohio City Provisions is not the first local-food grocery in Ohio. The Local Roots Market in Wooster beat Cleveland to it several years ago.

NATION

Homeownership Rate Remains Low

The nation's homeownership rate continues to languish. According to the Census Bureau, it stood at 63.7% at the end of 2016, well below the peak of 69.2% in 2004 during the housing boom. Indebted millennials are not buying houses and cars at the same rate their parents did.

StingRays Track Cellphones

Since about 2008, scores of federal agents and police departments across the nation have used cellphone-tracking technology such as StingRays. The device, manufactured by Harris

Corporation and others, is top secret, but it is often described as a heavy, suitcase-size apparatus. It mimics a celltower and thus attracts all nearby phone signals, which can then be captured and recorded by the listener. Despite their steep price (as much as \$500,000), such cell-site simulators are now ubiquitous and widely used. A recent report by the House Oversight & Government Reform Committee found that federal law enforcement agencies possess at least 434 of the devices and have spent at least \$95 million on them. The City of Baltimore, for instance, admitted in 2015 that it had used StingRays in 4,300 cases since 2007. Law-enforcement agencies love the technology, which they say is indispensable for catching suspected terrorists, murderers, rapists, and robbers. Understandably, agents and officers went to great lengths to keep the program secret. After all, not everyone appreciates his or her phone messages being monitored by complete strangers. Law enforcement must sign nondisclosure agreements in which they pledge to Harris Corporation or directly to the FBI that they will never divulge any details about the devices. – There are multiple problems with the StingRay program: 1. The privacy of not only the cellphone owner is violated; the device also collects data from all other cellphone users in the area, whether or not their phones are on or off, without notifying the owners. 2. In multiple instances, StingRays have been used not only to track down serious felons, but also petty thieves, run-away teenagers, or even witnesses. We are not aware of instances where officers employed the device for personal use, but it is likely that this happens, too. 3. Many states have started to pass laws that prohibit the use of StingRays without a search warrant or probable cause, and the Department of Justice has issued a similar guideline. (The U.S. Supreme Court has yet to rule on the issue. It is probably that it will insist on search warrants just like it ruled that search warrants must be obtained before GPS tracking devices are placed on vehicles.) But state laws and federal guidelines are often ignored. Over the past decade or so, thousands of people were arrested and hundreds of prisoners incarcerated on the basis of evidence that was obtained illegally. Conducting searches without warrants or probable cause is, of course, unconstitutional (except in circumstances of exigency), and there are now countless cases where the original sentences had to be revisited. It is also interesting to hear that prosecutors routinely drop their cases against suspected felons rather than disclose to defense lawyers, judges, and the public the origin of their data. 4. Once the secret is out, cell-site simulators could be created or obtained by anyone with the technological know-how or the means, and could be used by foreign agents or criminals for unethical purposes (such as spying or blackmail). In fact, the technology may already be widely in use. Once prices and sizes come down, the illegal skimming of phone data will one day become rampant. Therefore, cellphone users should receive fair warning so that they can protect themselves from fraud and other scams. California has passed a law that requires police agencies to receive City Council approval before employing StingRay devices and to disclose on their website that they use the technology. More transparency and accountability in this area is required.

Trump's Business Connections

What do the following 15 countries have in common: Bangladesh, China, Germany, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, the Netherlands, South Korea, Slovenia, Taiwan, Turkey, USA, and Vietnam? They are all countries where the Donald J. Trump Company manufactures products. They range from apparel, bath-and-body products, and home-décor items to fine drinks and food items. In addition, there are countries where he operates hotels and golf courses or with which he has financial connections. It seems peculiar that a president who says he wants to protect America's interests and make it great again is so heavily involved in offshoring efforts himself and imports the majority of the products from abroad. It is clear that there is a certain disconnect between his words and his actions. The situation is worrisome for another reason as well. Is it possible that Trump might favor countries in which his family business has investments (e.g., Russia) over countries with which he has fewer business ties (e.g., the Baltic States)? The line between the personal and the political seems very much obscured.

Anti-Semitism on the Rise

Jewish community centers (JCCs) around the nation have reported an uptick in bomb threats. In January, there were as many as

28 such threats in one day alone. In Columbus, Ohio, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Columbus received such a bomb threat on Jan. 18. The threats are normally fake, intended to instill fear and to cause disruption. The bombs in question may be hoaxes, but the anti-Semitism behind it is real, according to David Posner, a spokesperson for the Jewish Community Center Association of North America. Jewish leaders call the harassment a sickening sign of the times and wonder if it's going to be "the new norm."

Statehood for Puerto Rico?

Independence has not been good for Puerto Rico. The Caribbean Island has lost some 200,000 people in recent years and is deeply indebted. The majority of the 3.5 million Puerto Ricans are now in favor of becoming the 51st U.S. state, which would entitle it to more attention and better treatment. It already shares some of the rights and responsibilities that other states have. Puerto Ricans are considered U.S. citizens, carry U.S. passports, use the U.S. currency, serve in the military, and pay taxes for Social Security and Medicare. They also have one non-voting delegate in Congress. In his inaugural speech, Puerto Rico's new governor, Ricardo Rossello, has voiced his support for a popular referendum on the question whether to remain independent or become a state. It is hard to predict what will happen and if Congress and the Trump administration support the idea, but it is probably fair to say that Puerto Rico has never before been this close to statehood.

What the Mexican Tariffs Mean for Consumers

Mexico sent \$295 billion of goods across the U.S. border in 2015, making it America's third-largest trading partner. The biggest import is cars that are assembled in Mexican factories (\$74 billion). More than 2 million Mexican-made vehicles were sold in the U.S. in 2015. Other goods include machines, medical instruments, and fuels. Mexico is also the second-largest provider of agricultural products (\$21 b). These foods include fresh fruits and vegetables (e.g., bananas, mangoes, and avocados), canned fruit and vegetables, snack foods, and wine and beer. – A 20% tariff on Mexican imports would inevitably translate into a sudden price increase for American consumers. It would make foreign products such as clothing, electronics, or toys more expensive. For consumers that amounts to a new tax that they will have to pay, in part to help build Trump's Great Wall. Businesses that rely on imports (which includes the Koch Industries) are not happy about the proposed "border adjustment" because it means fewer sales for them. Major retailers such as Target and Walmart have formed a new coalition, "Americans for Affordable Products," and are fighting back. Of course, countries affected by tariffs will not sit idly by either. They will reciprocate by imposing similar tariffs. Foreigners will buy fewer American products, which may lead to lay-offs and shut-downs at manufacturing plants in America. The taxation of imports does not help domestic production and exports. – Free trade is as old as humanity. The free exchange of goods and ideas, services and people is a cornerstone of civilization. The question is not if "free trade" is a good idea. The focus should be on "fair trade" and how to ensure that trading partners and workers get treated fairly and equitably.

Soda Taxes Becoming Mainstream

Soda taxes on sugary drinks are becoming mainstream. In seven cities, voters have approved measures to impose a tax of at least one penny per ounce of sugary drinks, incl. pop, sweetened teas, and some fruit juices that contain added sugar. Other cities are considering such a step. Soda taxes are desired by public-health officials and physicians who say that sugary drinks contribute to obesity and type-2 diabetes, a claim that "Big Soda" (the American Beverage Association) denies. A number of cash-strapped cities with budget shortfalls have also adopted soda taxes, or are considering it, as a source of revenue to finance things like public health or childhood education. After Mexico introduced a national tax on sugary drinks and junk food in 2013, sales and consumption of these items did go down, particularly among low-income populations.

Female Doctors Provide Better Care

A study recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) concluded that female doctors may provide higher quality of care than their male counterparts. The researchers

looked at 1.5 million elderly Medicare patient hospitalizations between 2011 and 2014 and discovered that patients treated by female internists had a lower mortality rate within the next 30 days and a lower re-admission rate within 30 days of discharge. If men could achieve the same level of care, researchers estimated that there would be 32,000 fewer deaths each year among Medicare patients alone. The gender of the physician played an especially significant role for the sickest patients. Senior author Ashish Jha at Harvard stated, "There was ample evidence that male and female physicians practice medicine differently. Our findings suggest that those differences matter and are important to patient health." The study did not explore the reasons for this divide, but previous research has shown that 1. female doctors tend to follow clinical protocol and guidelines more closely than men and that 2. women practice a more patient-centered approach that involves greater compassion, better communication, and more preventative care. Despite the fact that women doctors provide superior care, however, their income is below that of men. In the academic world, they are less likely to reach the rank of full professor. – Incidentally, the same is generally true for academic institutions. Women are often the better, more empathetic teachers who shoulder a disproportionate burden of student support and institutional service. Men often refuse to do any of that and focus instead on scholarly research, which earns them higher social prestige and faster promotion. They are less concerned about patients dying and students failing, it seems.

The Politics of Prostate Cancer

Medicine is not something that is black or white. Cultural and political perceptions can have a major impact on prevention and treatment options of diseases. A good example is prostate cancer. There are some things experts agree on, but not many. More than 75% of prostate-cancer cases are in men 65 and older. Some 250,000 men are diagnosed with the disease every year, and about 28,000 die from prostate cancer annually, making it a leading cause of death. Other than that, little is known. The research is still in its infancy, and there is little certainty about anything. Doctors who tell you otherwise are misinformed. Some say prostate cancer is a growing public-health problem, others attribute the increased numbers to better diagnoses and longer life spans. Blacks seem to have a higher rate of prostate cancer than whites, but it's unclear whether this is because of race or socioeconomic factors. Some physicians have associated prostate cancer with lack of vitamin D, others see a connection to environmental degradation and drinking water contaminated with hormonal substances. There is a lack of clarity even over the exact definition of prostate cancer because not every prostate enlargement is cancerous or malignant. When it comes to treatment, similar confusion reigns. Do you operate or not? The current catchword seems to be "active surveillance" rather than treatment, but most doctors still seem to prefer aggressive surgery. What is fascinating, though, is the following aspect of prostate cancer, obvious to anyone familiar with European culture. When it comes to prevention, European physicians have consistently stated that "sex is the best medicine." Sexually active men are at a lower risk of developing prostate cancer, according to European perception. That view is widely discussed and accepted. A decrease in sexual activity changes the hormonal balance in men, resulting in prostate enlargements. To prevent "prostacongestion," European doctors recommend regular ejaculations to counter the entropic built-up of toxic substances. It is interesting to note that in puritan American culture this prevention option is NEVER discussed or even mentioned, although it may or may not have merit. We are not aware of any American research projects that are investigating the question although they may well exist. In America, studying sexual activity as a viable and effective treatment option for physical or mental diseases is taboo, and there is a significant stigma attached. Funding may be impossible to procure, and no insurance company would finance such a treatment option although it would be cheaper than others. The pharmaceutical industry too has zero interest in treatment programs that do not yield profits, so the European notion that "sex is the best medicine" is dead on arrival. Prostate cancer is a good example to demonstrate that cultural biases, religious superstitions, or political ideology can stymie progress. Fresh ideas are needed to understand and combat medical mysteries such as cancer.

Hearing Aids Should Not Be Cost-Prohibitive

Hearing loss is a growing public-health concern that affects not only senior citizens but people across the board. Unaddressed hearing loss can have grave consequences, often leading to social isolation, depression, and cognitive decline. However, hearing aids are prohibitively expensive. Depending on the technology used, they range between \$1,000 and \$3,500. In Central Ohio the going rate seems to be between \$1,800 and \$2,500. The hearing-aid industry says the price is fair if you factor in research & development, overhead & administrative expenses, and the services provided by the audiologist who selects, fits, programs, adjusts, and maintains the device. That argument is complete bogus. The technology used for hearing aids is primitive compared to much cheaper smart phones with hundreds of sophisticated apps. The industry is callously exploiting people and preventing many folks from getting the aid they need and deserve to have. "Highway robbery" is the appropriate term to describe this lucrative malpractice. The exorbitant price for hearing aids is aggravated by the fact that most insurance companies (including Medicare) only pay for the hearing tests but not for the actual hearing aid itself. Hearing loss is not considered a disability (even though it can lead to job termination), and hearing aids are therefore viewed as an unessential "cosmetic" procedure. – Several things must change: 1. Legislators should redefine hearing loss as a bona fide disability, entitling the person to legal protection and insurance coverage. 2. The usurious price of hearing aids must come down. The industry, which has long enjoyed a monopoly, must be reined in. One solution – permit over-the-counter sales of cheap devices as an alternative for full hearing aids similar to over-the-counter reading glasses. Of course, you get what you pay for. But more competition would eventually lead to reduced prices overall.

A Holocaust Denier in the White House

With right-wing people such as Stephen K. Bannon, now Trump's chief strategist with a full seat on the National Security Council, it is no surprise that Holocaust denial is making a resurgence. Trump's statement about the 2017 Holocaust Remembrance Day, which marked the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, did not mention the Jewish people. The White House later confirmed that this was an intentional decision. It is certainly true that Nazi Germany ruthlessly imprisoned and exterminated countless political opponents, socialists, Catholics, Gypsies, gays, mentally handicapped people, and so on, as well. But the main focus and aim from the inception of the movement was the elimination of the Jewish race in Germany. Hitler's "Mein Kampf" (1925) makes that very clear. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Virginia, sharply criticized the White House for deploying a well-known tactic that is often used by Holocaust deniers. They either deny that the extermination of Jews during the time of Nazi Germany (1933-45) ever happened, or they talk of war-related atrocities in such general terms that it amounts to the exculpation of Hitler and Germany.

OUR VIEW **The Trump Revolution**

In his inaugural speech, held Jan. 20, the new president reminded the country that it is a democracy. Government exists to serve the people, not the other way around. This elementary principle is sometimes forgotten. The establishment and the elites do have a tendency to protect and enrich themselves while blue-collar workers and the middle class take hits. The economy and the nation's wealth has grown in recent years, but too many people were left behind due to globalization and offshoring, mechanization and automation. As a result, we have seen growing anger, rebellion, and violence on the one hand (Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders) and an epidemic of despair, opioid abuse, and suicide on the other. It is clear that in 2016 the American people were ready to revolt against the untenable status quo, despite the obvious danger of chaos and anarchy. While America had long supported regimes in other parts of the world, it has neglected nation-building at home. Reasonable people will agree that all this is a more or less accurate picture of the state of the nation and that ordinary people have legitimate grievances. It is time that more attention is paid to the forgotten, the infrastructure, the inner cities, and rural areas. It is reassuring to hear that Trump wants to see America strong, wealthy, proud, safe, and

great again. We agree that a new vision, a new decree, a new start is necessary and that the time to act is here and now.

However, reasonable people also have grave concerns about the new president. That includes many Republicans and even followers of Trump himself: 1. While the message may be aligned with America's constitution and democratic values, the messenger himself is deeply flawed. Ordinary people cannot afford to buy the expensive suits that Trump wears or the dresses that Melania wears, or stay in Trump's elitist hotels and golf resorts. The new president and his cabinet of millionaires and billionaires operate in segregated enclaves to which ordinary folks have no access. Don't expect them to raise the minimum wage or to devise more family-friendly policies. Also, the business connections that he and his associates maintain will be a source of endless political and ethical strife. Sooner or later the American people will wake up and face disappointment and disillusionment. Trump is already entering the presidency with the lowest popularity rate of a president ever. 2. While many people agree that the time for empty talk is over and the hour of action has arrived, there is profound disagreement over what these actionable items should be. Trump himself has been vague or quiet about details, but from his speeches and tweets and from looking at the people with whom he has surrounded himself we know that he is not immune to secrecy, torture, trade wars, autocratic and imperial behavior, climate-change denial, conspiracy theories, white supremacy, internment camps, deportations, alliances with rogue states, and so on. While people may support his democratic message in principle, many may end up objecting to the specific proposals he will put forth, especially if and when they are in violation of traditional American values. 3. Lastly, the notion of "populism" is a double-edged sword. A government of, for, and by the people is a laudable goal, but sometimes populism can be a race to the bottom. Science and technology are rejected in favor of carnal knowledge, primeval instincts, and gut feelings. People are motivated by prejudices rather than by facts. One's tribal identity has a higher value than truth and honesty. Racism and bigotry take over. Violence replaces discourse. Disturbing signs of an ugly mob mentality were visible during Trump's campaign, and since the Nov. 8 elections hate speech and hate crime have exploded in the U.S. The better approach would be to educate people, lift them up, offer them hope, and appeal to their better angels.

It is within Trump's power to avoid these calamities if he proceeds with caution and care. Of course, caution and care have never been part of the Trump brand, and so it is safe to say that his presidency is likely to be a stormy and rocky one. It will be a battle from start to finish. It is our prediction that the America people will eventually come to regret their choice and that history will not judge Trump kindly.

Emma Lazarus (1849-1887) **The New Colossus**

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.*

*"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

Anti-Utopian Novels Are Sudden Bestsellers

Penguin USA reports that George Orwell's anti-utopian novel "1984" has reached a 9,500% increase in sales. Other dark and dystopian novels are also experiencing a renewed interest, among them Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale," Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," Philip Dick's "The Man in the High Castle," Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here," George Orwell's Animal Farm," Ayn

Rand's "Anthem," Philip Roth's "The Plot against America, and Yevgeny Zamyatin's "We." Another good book that might help explain the current political and psychological political situation is William Golding's "The Lord of the Flies." Non-fiction books include Hannah Arendt's "The Origins of Totalitarianism." There has been a lot of talk about strongmen, white supremacy, totalitarianism, internment camps, torture, lies, and mind control recently, and people are hungry for titles that help them make sense of the new landscape. When reality fails us, we seek guidance from poetry and fiction.

WORLD

Antigone: Divine vs. Human Law

Ethics and the law are not the same thing at all. They can even be in conflict with other. Many perfectly legal things are considered unethical by some – from abortion and capital punishment to fracking and mountaintop removal. And many ethical acts may get you in trouble with the law – for example when people helped escaped slaves or harbored persecuted Jews. One such stark example is the figure Antigone. Countless versions exist – plays and novels written in many languages, and even modern movie versions. The oldest extant stories are some 2,500 years old, written by the ancient Greek playwrights Euripides, Sophocles, and others. The essential story is this: Antigone feels compelled that her dead brother Polynices be mourned and provided a proper burial. Her religion and her tradition dictate that every dead person receive an honorable burial. However, King Creon, ruler of Thebes, has decreed that Polynices not be buried or even be mourned, on pain of death by stoning. His body is to be left for the dogs and birds. The conflict between worldly and divine law is a dilemma for Antigone, but she knows what the correct path is. She deliberately defies Creon's order and chooses to break the law. In her defense, she declares that divine law is superior to that made by mortal man. Sophocles' play "Antigone" ends in utter tragedy, as Antigone is locked in a tomb to die, on Creon's orders. Different adaptations arrive at different endings over the centuries and millennia, not all of which end in disaster, but the elemental point remains: there can be an irreconcilable conflict between ethical values, which are often timeless and universal, and political laws that are often short-lived and utilitarian. In our modern age, too, you will find numerous such conflicts. In 2013, Megan Rice, a Catholic nun in her eighties, was sentenced to prison for three years after she and two others hung banners and spray-painted peace slogans at a Tennessee nuclear facility for the production and storage of uranium. Driven by her desire to do the right thing, she was accused and convicted by modern-day Creons of sabotage, criminal damage, and of endangering national security. The difference between hero and traitor is not at all clear-cut, as the case of Edward Snowden illustrates.

Scientists for Hire

The nuclear industry and the tobacco lobby used to hire scientists to prove that their products were efficient and safe. These days, chemical and pharmaceutical companies are doing the same. They routinely fund university research programs, dictate the desired outcome, and then use the "independent" results to demonstrate to the world that their pesticides do not cause cancer or that their medications have curative qualities. It is a fraudulent game that is widely played. It's good for the reputation of the companies to have academics on their side; it is good for colleges and universities involved in such schemes to get their hands on much-needed research funds; and it is a good career move for faculty members because retention, tenure, promotion, and merit are often based on such external grants. A recent case in point (as reported by the New York Times) is Dr. James Cresswell from the prestigious University of Exeter in England. He was hired by the Swiss chemical giant Syngenta (now in Chinese hands) to prove that the cause for honey-bee decline was varroa mites, not the neonicotinoids ("neonics") used in Syngenta's pesticides. Dr. Cresswell was reluctant to enter into the agreement and only consented because he naively thought he would maintain editorial control and his scholarly independence, as promised. But when his initial research contradicted the varroosis theory promulgated by Syngenta, the company was not happy. They wanted a different outcome. They had paid the researcher good money to perform a service and insisted that he deliver the goods as THEY saw fit. Dr.

Cresswell suffered a breakdown and left his job for several months, but – unlike most of his colleagues – he did eventually speak up about his situation, which he called "a Faustian bargain" with the devil. He had the choice either to lose funding, prestige, and assistants or to manipulate and fabricate research data to keep the program going. Either way, he would lose his soul. No researcher comes out of this situation unscathed. And it is of course not just Syngenta that's doing it. Bayer, DuPont, Monsanto (now bought by Bayer) – they are all guilty as charged. There is one thing that can and must change. Colleges and universities should never pressure faculty into accepting such dark deals. Instead, they should have strict protocols in place that disclose and, when necessary, prohibit such arrangements on ethical grounds. Even better – perhaps interdisciplinary oversight panels should approve such contracts before consummated. When scientific data can be ordered, bought, and sold like any other commodity, then truth itself has lost its meaning. It is easy to see why the public has become skeptical of the claims of scholars to the point many people reject science altogether.

Kallstadt, Germany

Few have heard of Kallstadt in the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz). It is a small town of about 1,200 souls located just north of Bad Dürkheim near Ludwigshafen and Mannheim. It is known mostly for its vineyards, but now Kallstadt has a new claim to fame. It was here that Donald J. Trump's grandfather Friedrich (Frederick, Fred) Trump (1869-1918) was born. Kallstadt belonged to Bavaria at that time, a monarchy, and in order to escape prolonged military service young Friedrich illegally emigrated to the U.S. in 1885 at the young age of 16. Entrepreneurially minded, he opened barber shops, bars, and hotels and started to acquire property in Manhattan. He returned to Germany in 1902 to marry a neighbor, Elisabeth Christ, in Kallstadt's Lutheran church, and came back with her to the U.S. In 1904, he visited Germany with his homesick wife, but since his status was that of an illegal emigrant / immigrant he was forced to leave Germany again in 1905. The Kingdom of Bavaria decreed that he had forfeited his citizenship when he emigrated without permission. After World War I and World War II the Trump family spread the myth that the family was of Swedish descent because it did not wish to alienate Jewish clients. In "The Art of the Deal," Trump (or his ghostwriter) wrote that his grandfather "came here from Sweden as a child," but that is obviously a deliberate piece of misinformation. Donald Trump's family is loaded with immigrants: his grandfather, his mother, and two of his wives were born overseas. It is therefore hard to fathom where his often-stated hostility toward immigrants comes from. – In Germany, Trump is not popular, and the Kallstadters are actually rather embarrassed by and ashamed of the connection. Many residents have mixed and confused feelings. They are taking a cautious wait-and-see attitude, refusing to discuss politics. Perhaps Trump will be a great American president and make Kallstadt proud. Maybe he will be a terrible president and be impeached. For now, the birthplace of Friedrich Trump is for sale because the current owner does not appreciate all the unwanted attention from journalists and Trump pilgrims. Kallstadt prefers things to be quiet, peaceful, and orderly...

Global Arms Sales in 2015

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, a division of the Library of Congress, has issued its annual report, "Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 2008-2015." The annual review is considered the most comprehensive assessment of global arms sales available in unclassified form. In 2015, the total size of the global arms trade was about \$80 billion. The U.S. ranked first in sales, signing deals for about \$40 billion or 50% of all worldwide agreements. France was the no. 2 weapons dealer with \$15 billion in sales. Russia, another dominant power, sold arms worth \$11.1 billion. China has doubled its sales since 2014, reaching \$6 billion. Developing nations bought about \$65 billion in weapons (about 80%). That number is lower than the 2014 figure, but still high. Three developing nations bought more than half of all weapons produced – Qatar signed deals for more than \$17 billion, followed by Egypt (almost \$12 billion) and Saudi Arabia (more than \$8 billion). Other big spenders include Iraq, Israel, Pakistan, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates. Latin America, in particular Venezuela, have become a focus of marketing efforts for Russia, the report notes. – Obviously, there is something very wrong when Third-

World nations prioritize weapons and military systems over infrastructure & economics, health & education. And there is something equally wrong when First-World nations profit from overseas weapons sales that in many cases are used to wage devastating wars against neighbors or in civil wars.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Ever since it opened, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway has been the subject of speculation and conspiracy theories. But there is really nothing mysterious about it. It is a back-up seed bank for the world's 1,750 or so seed banks and warehouses where agricultural seed is stored. Regional seed banks are subject to human error, accidents, equipment failure, and budget cuts and have been destroyed by flooding, fire, other natural disasters, and war, so they send portions of their inventory to Norway for safe storage. Svalbard works like a bank-deposit system. Any time a calamity occurs, the Svalbard Seed Vault stands ready to transfer back seed it had received so that it can be regenerated. In the meantime, the seed contents remain the sole property of the 233 participating countries (incl. the U.S.), and no one has access. – Svalbard was built on the island archipelago of Spitsbergen, about 800 miles from the North Pole. It is well-secured subterranean facility, safe from earthquakes, sea-level rise, heat, terrorism, and so on. A long tunnel leads to three large storage chambers, only one of which is currently in use. The entire facility has a capacity to conserve 4.5 million seed samples. The seed is stored at -18°C or about +/-0°F to prevent metabolic activity and aging. Although Svalbard is not open to the public, there are videos available on YouTube that take you on a virtual tour. Also, the contents are publicly searchable through an online database. There is nothing strange and untoward happening at Svalbard. It is all based on common sense and the willingness of people to work together to ensure a sustainable future for all of humankind.



Maggie Smith's "Good Bones"

The following poem by Maggie Smith was written following the 2016 Orlando mass killing in which 49 people died. It was first published by the online journal "Waxwing." It is now an "official poem of 2016" and in the public domain. The author grew up in Westerville, has a degree from OSU, and lives in Bexley with her husband and two children. – When realtors try to sell you a dump, they often use the phrase "good bones." This poem is about the current state of the world. Is it a total wreck or is there hope to rehab the zombie house? Though full of anxiety, the poem ultimately ends on a positive note when it dreams of rebuilding and creating a better world.

Good Bones by Maggie Smith

*Life is short, though I keep this from my children.
Life is short, and I've shortened mine
in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,
a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways
I'll keep from my children. The world is at least
fifty percent terrible, and that's a conservative
estimate, though I keep this from my children.
For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.
For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,
sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world
is at least half terrible, and for every kind
stranger, there is one who would break you,
though I keep this from my children. I am trying
to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,
walking you through a real shithole, chirps on
about good bones: This place could be beautiful,
right? You could make this place beautiful.*