

# Community Matters

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

**December 2017**  
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**Send info, articles, or comments to [delawarecommunitymatters@gmail.com](mailto:delawarecommunitymatters@gmail.com)**

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## CALENDAR OF LOCAL EVENTS

### **First Friday (12/1-3)**

First Friday is going to be an all-weekend event in December. On Fri., 12/1 (6-9 pm), there will be the tree lighting, Santa House (6-8 pm), carriage rides, carolers, and other festivities. Sat., Dec. 2, includes Santa House (1-3 pm), carriage rides, and Holiday Open House to explore downtown Delaware all day. The Christmas Parade will be held Sun., Dec. 3 (3 pm); the step-off is from Mingo Park. For a complete schedule, visit [www.mainstreetdelaware.com](http://www.mainstreetdelaware.com).

### **"Glice" Skating in Downtown Delaware (12/1-3)**

Main Street Delaware & the City of Delaware have rented & installed a synthetic ice rink made of silicon plastic ("glice") at the basketball courts at Willis Education Center, 74 W. William St. Admission is free. Rentals are available on Fri. (6-9 pm), Sat. (12-9 pm), and Sun. (12-6 pm). If the community likes the idea, it could become a regular feature. "Glice" surfaces are not dependent on temperature and can be used year-round.



### **Richard Cowdrey at Fundamentals (12/1)**

Award-winning and best-selling Ohio illustrator Richard Cowdrey will be at Fundamentals on Fri., Dec. 1 (6:30-8 pm) to sign books. Among his many titles are "Bad Dog, Marley," "Candy Cane," and "Wakem the Rooster." He has also illustrated scores of book covers and other things. To view some of his work, visit [www.rcowdrey.com](http://www.rcowdrey.com). – Fundamentals, now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year, is located at 25 W. Winter St. in downtown Delaware.

### **Andrews House Christmas Cupboard (12/2) – \$**

The Andrews House Christmas Cupboard is an annual fundraiser. For sale are donated cookies, baked goods, and other gourmet items. Wreaths are available, too. Come enjoy the festive holiday ambience of the Andrews House at 39 W. Winter St. on Sat., Dec. 2 (9 am – 2 pm). A preview will be held Fri., Dec. 1 (5-9 pm). For more info, visit [www.andrewshouse.org](http://www.andrewshouse.org).

### **One-Act Plays at OWU (12/1-2)**

OWU presents "One Act Plays," written, staged & performed by OWU's directing and playwriting classes. Student-directors and playwrights will share 4 plays Fri., Dec. 1 (8 pm), and 4 different plays Sat., Dec. 2 (8 pm). The plays mix the comic & the serious, and may contain adult themes & language. The performances will be held on the Main Stage inside Chappellear Drama Center, 45 Rowland Ave. Free & open to the public.

### **Open House at Nash Historical Museum (12/2-3)**

In what has become an annual tradition, the Nash House Museum at 157 E. William St. will have an open house on Sat., Dec. 2 (2-5 pm), and Sun., Dec. 3 (4-6:30 pm, after the Christmas parade). Refreshments will be offered. The house will be decorated in the Victorian style and be open to the public for tours. Admission is free, but donations are accepted. – The Nash House Museum and the adjacent Cryder Historical Center are operated by the Delaware County Historical Society. The website is [www.delawareohiohistory.org](http://www.delawareohiohistory.org).

### **Evening at Gallant Farm (12/2)**

Preservation Parks is inviting the community to "Winter Evening on the Farm" on Sat., Dec. 2 (3-8 pm). Visitors can enjoy live music, a camp fire, roasting chestnuts, sipping hot wassail (made with apple cider), and sampling homemade cookies. Gallant Farm is located at 2150 Buttermilk Rd. just north of Delaware. Free & open to the public.

### **Pearl Harbor Day (12/3)**

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is celebrated annually to commemorate the more than 2,400 people who were killed in a surprise attack 76 years ago, on Dec. 7, 1941. – The Delaware County Veterans Association will lead a Pearl Harbor Day remembrance ceremony on Sun., Dec. 3. Events will take place 12:45-1:15 pm on the Winter St. bridge and include the playing of taps, a rifle volley, and a wreath ceremony. The ceremony will last no longer than 15 minutes.

### **Choral Art Society (12/3)**

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

### **Court House Open for Visitors (12/3)**

The new Delaware County Court House at 110 N. Sandusky St. finally opened in November. An open house is scheduled for Sun., Dec. 3 (2-4 pm). The open house will allow the public to visit the new facility and learn about its design and operations from the staff. It cost \$39 million to build the 5-level, 95,000-square-foot building. – Visitors are asked to use the entrance at Union St. instead of N. Sandusky St.

### **Lessons & Carols Concert (12/4)**

OWU's Choral Art Society and the Delaware Community Chorus will present a "Lessons & Carols" concert, featuring Christmas carols, congregational hymns, and spiritual readings in Gray Chapel inside University Hall on Mon., Dec. 4 (7 pm). Free & open to the public.

### **"Indivisible" Meeting (12/6)**

Delaware's "Indivisible" group meets on the first Wednesday of each month. The next meeting is Wed., Dec. 6 (7-8:30 pm) at Liberty Community Center (207 London Rd.). After the business meeting there will be a book share / swap.

### **Asbury's First Thursday Organ Concert (12/7)**

Asbury's 2017 First Thursday Noontime Recital Series continues on Thurs., Dec. 7 (12:15-12:45 pm) with a collection of

duets on keyboard instruments. The soloists are Sally Casto & Jan Swanson. Asbury United Methodist Church is located at 55 W. Lincoln Ave. The concerts are free & open to the public. The complete 2017/18 scheduled can be found on the website of Asbury UMC.

### **Sustainable Delaware Ohio Meets (12/9)**

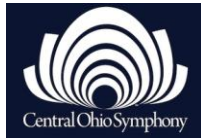
Sustainable Delaware Ohio meets on the second Saturday of each month. This month's gathering is on Dec. 9 (9:30-11 am) in the Community Room of the public library. The meetings are open to anyone interested in economic, social & environmental sustainability.

### **"Nutcracker" Performance (12/9)**

Under the artistic direction of Sher Lee Wu, the Columbus City Ballet School presents a performance of the "Nutcracker" suite and Christmas ballet on Sat., Dec. 9 (2 pm) in the Chappelle Drama Center on the OWU campus. Tickets are \$15-27. For more info, visit [www.columbuscityballetschool.com](http://www.columbuscityballetschool.com).

### **Westerville Symphony Performs (12/10) – \$**

The Westerville Symphony ([www.westervillesymphony.org](http://www.westervillesymphony.org)) performs "Sounds of the Season" on Sun., Dec. 10 (5 pm) at Otterbein Univ.'s Fritsche Theatre (inside Cowan Hall) at 30 S. Grove St. The program includes selections from the "Nutcracker," "Hansel and Gretel," "White Christmas" as well as favorite Yuletide sing-alongs.



### **Symphony Holiday Concert (12/10) – \$**

The Central Ohio Symphony will perform two identical concerts on Sun., Dec. 14 (2 pm and 4:30 pm) in Gray Chapel inside University Hall on the OWU campus (61 S. Sandusky St.). The Lone Raven Celtic Band returns by popular demand with new special arrangements backed by the Symphony under the direction of Jaime Morales-Matos. Additional works include "A Charlie Brown Christmas," Leroy Anderson's "A Christmas Festival," and Strauß' "Radetzky March." Also on the program is the world premiere of an original composition ("Welcome Sun") by Delaware Hayes High School student Noah Goulet. Tickets are \$25, \$20 for senior citizens, \$6 for students, and \$4 for children. The Symphony's office is located at 24 E. Winter St., the website is [www.centralohiosymphony.org](http://www.centralohiosymphony.org).

### **Hanukkah, Christmas & Kwanzaa**

Hanukkah begins at sundown on Tues., Dec. 12, and ends 8 days later on Wed., Dec. 20. Christmas Day is Mon., Dec. 25. The week-long Kwanza celebration begins Tues., Dec. 26, and ends Mon., Jan. 1.

### **Yardwaste Pickup Ends (12/15)**

Fri., Dec. 15 is the last day for curbside yard-waste collection in the City of Delaware. Any residual yard waste will be collected when Christmas trees are picked up between Jan. 8 and Feb. 2. Regular yard-waste collection resumes in April.

### **Book Talks at Stratford Ecological Center (12/15)**

Stratford's "Book Talks" series with retired librarian Liz Barker continues with a lively discussion on the topic of citizen-scientists on Fri., Dec. 15 (6:30-8 pm). Registration is not required. "Book Talks" normally meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of each month, but this month is an exception. The cost is \$10 for the year.

### **All Life Community Holds Holiday Bazaar (12/17)**

The All Life Community at 5700 Columbus Pike (State Rt. 23 S) is holding a holiday bazaar on Sun., Dec. 17 (1-5 pm). You may choose from a wide variety of local art, specialty gifts, teas, herbs, jewelry, lotions, soaps, books, CDs & gift certificates, along with live music and complementary services.

### **Delaware Community Chorus (1/17) – \$**

The Delaware Community Chorus, under the artistic director of Joshua Brodbeck, will perform a concert entitled "Caroling around

the World: A Celebration of International Songs" on Sun., Dec. 17 (3 & 5 pm) at Asbury UMC (55 W. Lincoln Ave.). (The Dispatch & the Gazette say showtimes are 2:30 & 5:30 pm.) A Facebook post reads, "from songs from Sweden to Liberia, and from concert halls to kazooos, we're leaving little unexplored." Tickets are \$10 and available at the door or from any chorus member.

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

Thurs., Dec. 21, marks the official start of the winter season. It'll be icy in January & February, but from this day on the days are getting longer again. Daylight Saving Time begins Sun., March 11. Spring starts on Tues., March 20!

### **Ohio Wildlife Center Celebrates (12/27) – \$**

The Ohio Wildlife Center at 6131 Cook Rd. in Powell is celebrating the holidays with another open house on Wed., Dec. 27 (1-4 pm). Meet some of the animal ambassadors up close, make bird feeders, and take home winter crafts. Admission is \$5 per person (ages 5 and up) or free with a donation from the Ohio Wildlife Center wishlist. For more info, visit [www.ohiowildlifecenter.org](http://www.ohiowildlifecenter.org).

## **DELAWARE**

### **Local Elections Results from Nov. 7, 2017**

#### **City Council**

All four incumbents seeking re-election to Delaware City Council retained their seats on Nov. 7. At-large members George Hellinger, Carolyn Kay Riggle, and Kent Shafer were re-elected for 4-year terms (2017-21). Jim Browning was elected to the Third Ward seat, which he has occupied as an appointed member since the death of Councilmember Joe DiGenova. His term expires in 2019.

#### **Riggle Reelected as Mayor**

On Nov. 20, City Council reelected Carolyn Kay Riggle as mayor and Kent Shafer as Vice-Mayor of the City of Delaware for another two-year period (2017-19) in a unanimous voice vote.

#### **Delaware City Schools**

Incumbent school board members Jayna McDaniel-Browning and Frances O'Flaherty kept their seats. Newcomer Michael J. Wiener won the race against Deborah Kruse Guebert. Write-in candidate Mark Butler did not succeed in his bid.

#### **Diversity Not on Display**

Nationwide, diversity was on display on Nov. 7. Lots of African-Americans, Hispanics, LGBT folks, etc., won races and broke new ground. The only groundbreaking in Delaware is for new housing and business development, it seems. There was no pathway for minority candidates such as Mark Butler and Laura Roberts. As a result, people without a voice in government continue to live on the margins and in the shadows, remaining underserved. However, Butler and Roberts helped advance the community conversation, and for that they deserve our thanks and respect.

#### **Delaware City Schools Levy**

The Delaware City Schools levy passed with a 60.9% margin (5,255 to 3,369 votes). The 8.35-mill levy renewal will raise \$6.2 million per year for the next five years. The measure gives the school system some breathing room and avoids cuts in personnel and programs. Collection will begin in 2018.

#### **Big Walnut School Levy**

Sunbury's Big Walnut School levy also seems to have passed, albeit by the slim margin of 50.9% to 49.1% (3,825 to 3,682 votes). The Delaware County Board of Elections will officially certify the results on Nov. 28.

#### **Delaware Area Career Center**

Voters in four neighboring counties (Franklin, Marion, Morrow, and Union) rejected the 10-year, 1.7-mill levy to support the DACC consolidation project, but the outcome could not and did not

change the overwhelming support Delaware County voters gave the issue two years ago. The \$45 million project on State Rt. 23 S. will now resume as soon as the Board of Elections certifies the levy. Some 1,400 students are served by the center.

### **Preservation Parks Levy**

Delaware County voters approved a 10-year parks levy that will raise more than \$6.5 million annually. The measure passed by a 62.6% margin (27,785 to 16,600). The parks system will use the funds to open two more properties in the near future (along Pollock Rd. in Delaware and along Bale Kenyon Rd. south the Alum Creek Lake), expand Emily Traphagen Park, purchase additional properties, improve and connect existing trails, etc. Preservation Parks also uses state grants from OEPA and ODNR to expand and upgrade its system. To learn more about Preservation Parks' ten-year plan, visit [www.preservationparks.com](http://www.preservationparks.com) and click on "About Us."

### **State Issues #1 and #2**

On Nov. 7, Ohio's voters approved State Issue #1, also known as "Marsy's Law," by a wide margin. The measure enshrines victims' rights into Ohio's constitution. Critics (such as the ACLU) fear that it might truncate and compromise the rights of the accused. – Voters rejected State Issue #2 by a wide 4-to-1 margin, handing a victory to pharmaceutical companies that poured a record-breaking \$65 to \$70 million into the campaign to defeat the measure. While the average voter agrees that Big Pharma is price-gouging us (and is in part responsible for the opioid epidemic), many were concerned about taxpayers being held responsible for attorney's fees.



### **Widespread Flooding in Delaware**

After heavy rains, the Delaware Run was so swollen on Oct. 18 & 19 that pretty much all of Blue Limestone Park was underwater and had to be closed. At OWU, too, the Delaware Run went over its banks and flooded part of the campus; the water came within inches of the labyrinth. Numerous city streets and county roads were submerged, and ordinarily dry "detention ponds" were filled to the rim.

### **Stratford Ecological Center Is Going Solar**

Stratford is launching a \$115,000 capital campaign to fund a comprehensive solar array of 156 panels on top of their barn and machinery shed to provide 90% of their electric needs. The Center is providing residents, families, groups, or businesses an opportunity to make a "one-time" donation to buy a \$200 solar panel. Donations will: \* reduce carbon emissions by keeping fossil fuels in the ground; \* promote alternative energy to the many thousands of public visitors at Stratford; \* help Stratford to be more financially sustainable; \* place more financial resources saved by producing our own electric toward children's programs; \* model & educate people on sustainability & self-sufficiency by being "off the grid"; \* have people's name proudly displayed in the lobby of Stratford's education building. Names will be listed on the Solar Campaign exhibit displayed in the reception area in the following manner: Sunbeam – donation of \$200 (funds 1 solar), Power Ranger – donation of \$1,000 (funds 5 solar panels), and Solar Supreme – any donation above \$1,000. To donate, visit [www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org](http://www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org). A "Solar Commitment Pledge Form" is available there. As Stratford will commence construction ASAP, they would like to receive payments prior to Dec. 1, if possible. Donations are tax-deductible (#31-1312879). For more info, contact David Hoy at [davidhoy@stratfordecologicalcenter.org](mailto:davidhoy@stratfordecologicalcenter.org).

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

City Council is scheduled to have 2 budget work sessions on Sat., Dec. 2 (8:45 am – 12 pm) and Mon., Dec. 4 (6-9 pm) and to hold regular meetings on Mon., Dec. 11, and Thurs., Dec. 21. Additional commissions and board meetings include: Wed., Dec. 6 – Planning Commission; Wed., Dec. 13 – Board of Zoning Appeals; Tues., Wed., Dec. 20 (note the new date!) – Historic Preservation Commission. All

meetings take place at 7 pm unless noted otherwise. The Civil Service Commission, the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, and the Shade Tree Commission do not meet this month.

### **2018 City Budget Approval Process**

City Council held its 1<sup>st</sup> reading and public hearing on the 2018 budget on Mon., Nov. 27. A 2<sup>nd</sup> reading and second public hearing is scheduled for Dec. 11. Work sessions are scheduled for Sat., Dec. 2 (8:45 am – 12 pm), Mon., Dec. 4 (6-9 pm), and possibly Thurs., Dec. 7 (if needed). Next year's budget will be formally approved at Council's the year-end meeting on Thurs., Dec. 21. The 2018 Programmatic Budget (100 pp.) and Line Item Budget (149 pp.) are available on the City's website, [www.delawareohio.net](http://www.delawareohio.net).

### **The Community Promotions Fund**

Delaware allocates revenues from the city's hotels and motels occupancy tax to organizations, events, and activities that promote the community and other cultural opportunities. The annual amount is about \$80,000. The 2018 recipients of such grants include the Arts Castle (\$15,000), the Central Ohio Symphony (\$10,000), Main Street (\$20,000), and the Second Ward Community Initiative (\$11,530). Additional monies are going to fireworks (\$35,000, of which \$25,000 is donated), sister-city promotion efforts (\$5,000), and special events (\$11,000).

### **Delaware Joins "Peak Democracy"**

Part of the City's proposed budget for 2018 is funding for a plan to allow residents "to have more input on city-wide issues." "Peak Democracy" is a national and indeed international web-based citizen-engagement platform. The City is allocating the amount of \$8,000 for the project. According to the national [www.peakdemocracy.com](http://www.peakdemocracy.com) website, the nonpartisan company was founded in 2007 and is now part of "OpenGov." It provides opportunities for virtual town-hall meetings designed to build public trust in government. Hundreds of such forums already exist around the nation.

### **The BIA and the City**

According to City Manager Tom Homan, "the Building Industry Association of Central Ohio (BIA) has raised concerns about the fee levels the City charges for new development, particularly those fees associated with plan review and inspections." At the 11/13 meeting of City Council, both David Efland and Bill Ferrigno stated that the BIA has also requested faster turnaround for paperwork. Members of the Shade Tree Commission have expressed worry about possible BIA pressure to lower tree-replacement fees. The commission, upon the recommendation of City Arborist Doug Richmond, unanimously recommended to keep the current fee structure in place, but it remains to be seen what City Council decides. – The BIA is certainly entitled to lobby for what's in the best interest of its stakeholders. However, the City has an obligation to do what's in the best interest of residents and to keep its policies, processes, and practices open and fair. A request by the Shade Tree Commission to be present at meetings between City Staff and the BIA was not honored. The public was not informed about or invited to any of the meetings with the BIA either. According to Tom Homan, another one was scheduled for late November. It would indeed be nice to know what's going on behind closed doors. Such practices are not aligned with the City's stated goal to build public trust. Nationally, industry leaders are given the tools to dismantle regulations they don't like. It would be good to know what Delaware's stance is in such situations.

### **Delaware Gets Entrepreneurial Center**

Planned for 2018/19 is Delaware's first entrepreneurial center, in partnership with OWU's Woltemade Center & Delaware County. The center will serve pre- and first-phase business startups with resources and working space to allow the companies to grow in Delaware. The old Delaware Gazette building and a portion of the Willis Education Center were considered as possible choices, but the decision was made to house the new center in OWU's Stewart Hall, 70 S. Sandusky St., next to the Ross Art Center. The City of Delaware is allocating \$250,000 for the center, to be paid over a 5-year period. Delaware County was asked to do the same. – The City of Dublin has what appears to be a vibrant entrepreneurial center



([www.decindublin.com](http://www.decindublin.com)) in case you are wondering what an entrepreneurial center is and does.



### **Sakata Delegation Visits Delaware**

From Nov. 2 to 8, a two-person delegation from Delaware's sister city in Japan, Sakata, spent a week in Delaware. Hideo Kishiya, the director of the Sakata City Library, and Hitoshi Nagata, director general of the Sakata Policy Promotion Dept., toured many places in Delaware and Columbus. The visit focused on arts and culture and explored ways for future cooperation involving the Ross Art Museum, the Arts Castle, and the Central Ohio Symphony. – There is a chance that OWU's Ross Art Museum will one day host an exhibition featuring the photographs of one of Sakata's most renowned artists, the late Ken Domon (1909-1990). He gifted all his 70,000 works to his hometown, which in 1983 created the first Japanese museum dedicated to photography (see the image above). The collection includes pictures about World War II and Japan's social life & religious heritage.

### **Property Crimes in Delaware**

Delaware is a relatively safe place to live, according to Elite Personal Finance, which has ranked cities based on violent crimes since 2015. Delaware's Police Dept. does not issue annual reports, however. Local crime statistics are either anecdotal, inconsistent, or unavailable. There is therefore no way to compare the metrics of Delaware and the effectiveness of its police force with those of other communities. Considering that a huge chunk of the City's annual operating budget (close to \$9 million or 40% in 2018) goes to law enforcement, that lack of transparency and accountability is something that should be addressed. However, some figures are built into the annual budgets of the City of Delaware. According to the proposed 2018 budget, there were 529 petty thefts in the city in 2016, 191 felony thefts, 98 burglaries, 3 aggravated burglaries, 48 cases of breaking & entering, and 10 robberies. That's a total of 879 property-related crimes. With one more month to go, the numbers for 2017 appear to be similar.

### **Mid Ohio Printing Center Likely to Be Demolished**

Delaware residents Jill & Jeff Rice would like to purchase the former Mid Ohio Printing Center at 50 W. William St. from current owner David Hutson, demolish the vacant and dilapidated building, and replace it with a new structure. The property is zoned B-3. Jill Rice is a trained and licensed exercise physiologist and has operated small boutique fitness studios in the past before moving to Delaware. Her preferred option is to construct a new 2-story building, the first story being a boutique fitness studio to meet patients on a 1-on-1 basis and conduct public classes. The current structure is in poor and unsafe condition, and it would be cost-prohibitive to rehab it. It also has little or no architectural value. The 1-story building was originally built as a gas station and is indeed somewhat of an intrusion to Delaware's historic district. At its Nov. 29 meeting, Delaware's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) discussed the request and voiced no objections. Chairman Roger Koch indicated that in his assessment there is "nothing worth saving." – At the moment, it is unknown if there are any underground tanks left on the property; no records have been found so far. An environmental assessment is part of the plan.

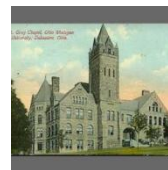
### **No-Smoking Policy in City Parks Discussed**

At its 11/21 meeting, the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board discussed smoking in city parks. There are currently signs in the vicinity of playgrounds that discourage smoking: "Please Don't Smoke – Young Lungs at Play!" However, the signs are often ignored by adults during baseball or soccer matches, leading to complaints. As cultural norms have shifted, more and more Central Ohio communities have taken the next step and banned smoking in parks altogether. The examples of Hilliard and Sunbury were mentioned. With Abbey Trimble from the Health District present, the advisory board discussed various

options, including movable A-frames at special events that would read, "No smoking beyond this point." The YMCA was encouraged to address the issue when people sign up for games and events. Some members of the board indicated that they would be comfortable with a 100% ban on tobacco products in the parks. Parks & Rec Director Ted Miller acknowledged that the topic keeps coming up. He will send inquiries to other communities to learn about their best practices, and the item will be discussed again at the January meeting. – Second-hand smoke is indeed harmful. The health of children should be the highest priority. It is not unreasonable to ask adults to refrain from smoking for a brief period of time or to smoke elsewhere.

### **News from the Shade Tree Commission**

As of Nov. 28, the City of Delaware has replaced all street trees that were lost to the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). 221 trees were planted this past November, reducing the backlog to zero. Arborist Doug Richmond reported at the last meeting of the Shade Tree Commission that in 2017 the City spent \$4.31 per head on public trees along streets, in parks, and in the cemetery. Delaware expects to be a Tree City USA again next year, for the 37<sup>th</sup> time in a row.



### **City Proclamation Recognizing OWU's Anniversary**

At the Council meeting of Nov. 27, Mayor Carolyn Kay Riggle read a proclamation that recognized the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ohio Wesleyan University, founded in 1842. On behalf of OWU, President Dr. Rock Jones accepted the document and thanked the City for the gesture. Both acknowledged the strong "bond" and meaningful "partnership" that exists between the city and the university.

### **Tuition, Room & Board at OWU**

OWU's Board of Trustees has set the following student charges for the 2018-19 academic year: tuition \$45,500, room \$5,705, and board \$5,630. The total is thus \$56,835, a 2.4% increase over the 2017-18 academic year. Numerous students receive generous need-based or merit-based financial aid. In fact, the "discount rate" for the class of '21 was 68%. – Education is expensive, but it remains an excellent investment. Students with college degrees have a much better chance of being employed in well-paying jobs and over their lifetime earn much more than people with less education. College-educated people are also happier individuals and make better citizens.

### **Transition in Admissions**

OWU President Rock Jones announced on Nov. 30 that Susan Dileno, Vice President for Enrollment & Strategic Communication, is leaving OWU "to pursue other opportunities." Dwayne Todd, Vice President for Student Engagement & Success, is taking over the Admissions operation on an interim basis while a national search for a permanent replacement is being conducted. Todd will have a lot on his plate. OWU has an overall enrollment goal of 2,020 and has a long way to go before it reaches that target.

### **OWU Approves Sustainability Plan**

As of November 2017, OWU has an aspirational "Sustainability Plan" that was produced by faculty, staff, and students who were members of the Sustainability Task Force, and approved and endorsed by the administration. To raise awareness and to achieve "a culture of sustainability," the document focuses on four key components: 1. the role of sustainability in the academic curriculum, 2. global climate change, 3. food, health & well-being, and 4. sustainable living options and practices for students. The plan also envisions making the 200-acre campus / arboretum more friendly to wildlife, including birds and bees. The construction of a fully funded chimney-swift tower is now in the works, and the restoration of the Delaware Run between S. Sandusky St. and Henry St. is on-going. – OWU's Sustainability Plan is a working document that will continue to evolve as priorities change. Not all aspects of the plan are currently funded and can be delivered by a certain deadline. However, in a brief

statement OWU President Rock Jones affirmed OWU's "philosophical commitment to sustainability." Perhaps some day OWU will even sign the Presidents Climate Commitment (Second Nature) and become a member of Tree Campus USA... What OWU's Sustainability Plan does not do is address the economic, social, and cultural inequities beyond the campus.

### **"The Historian" Leaves OWU in 2018**

After 25 years, history professor Dr. Richard F. Spall, Jr., is ready to hand over the editorship for "The Historian" to a colleague at another institution. The prestigious national journal, which publishes articles and numerous book reviews every quarter, has operated on the OWU campus since 1993. Over the years, "The Historian" has provided generations of students with jobs and publication experience as editorial assistants. In total, some 32,600 history books were added to OWU's Beeghly Library, making the history collection top-notch.

### **OWU Will Perform "Royal Gambit" and "Cabaret" in Spring 2018**

"*Royal Gambit*," a 1957 play by German author Hermann Gressieker (1903-1983), is a retelling of Henry VIII and his six wives. The work is filled with romance, rebellion, back-stabbing intrigue, scandal, and betrayal. But what makes "Royal Gambit" particularly interesting is that Gressieker uses the story as a metaphor for civilization's progress from the Middle Ages to the Age of Reason and modernity. The play has a contemporary theme regarding the continued use and abuse of power of men in positions of authority over the centuries. The work was never performed on Broadway and was never filmed, but it does enjoy a certain cachet in the arts circles and deserves greater recognition than it normally receives. In his native Germany, Gressieker is essentially forgotten. OWU will perform the work (translated & adapted by George White) from Feb. 15-18 under the direction of Elane Denny-Todd.

Many people are familiar with the 1972 movie "*Cabaret*" with Liza Minelli. Its origins go back to the novel "Goodbye to Berlin" (1939) by Christopher Isherwood. In 1951, John Van Druten adapted the novel for his play "I Am a Camera." In 1966 the original Broadway production became a hit and inspired numerous subsequent productions as well as the 1972 film. The OWU production uses the book by Joe Masteroff, with lyrics by Fred Ebb and music by John Kander. Produced jointly with OWU's Music Dept., it features many of the unforgettable tunes, incl. numbers as "Willkommen," "Maybe This Time," and, of course, "Cabaret." Set in 1931 Berlin as the Nazis rose to power, the play focuses on the nightlife at the seedy Kit Kat Klub and revolves around a young American writer and his relationship with the 32-year-old performer. The club serves as a metaphor for ominous political developments at the end of the Weimar Republic. OWU will perform the work April 13-14 and 20-21 under the direction of Ed Kahn.

### **Robert Olmstead's Novel "Savage Country" (2017)**

Bob Olmstead teaches creative writing at OWU; "Savage Country" is his 9<sup>th</sup> novel. – The year is 1873, and Michael Coughlin has returned from Africa to look after the estate of his dead brother. Michael fought in the American Civil War on the Confederate side. After that, he worked as a mercenary as well as a big-game hunter for a rich banker and politician, Mr. Salt. He is an experienced and confident soldier and hunter for whom killing comes easy. His brother's estate, Meadowlark, is not in good financial shape, as David's widow, Elizabeth, gradually begins to realize. To pay off the debts and to save the farm, David had the idea to travel south, to shoot the buffalo, and to make a great deal of money. Elizabeth tries to persuade Michael to accompany her and to lead the expedition in David's stead, but he initially declines because he knows the plan is dangerous, bloody, and foolhardy. Michael seems to see everything and understand everything. He also has a remarkable relationship with his horse and his two dogs. Elizabeth admires his skill "to read the land, sky, and water, the sun and the stars, men and animals" (132). It is Michael, who is the undisputed hero or antihero of the book, but over time Elizabeth also starts to learn, mature, and develop more self-confidence until she almost becomes his equal. Off they go, but the landscape (its own character in the novel) is hostile, the elements conspire against them, and they encounter murdered travelers. But finally they make it to the grazing grounds of the bison, and in chapter

18, the heart of the book, the great shooting commences. It is harrowing devil's work, and Michael knows that he has begun his part in the great vanishing of the extermination and disappearance of the American bison. Hundreds and thousands of animals are killed, skinned, and their hides shipped off by freighters. "Industry wanted every buffalo hide it could get" (178) to make drive belts and pulleys for factories, mills, and farms. In the meantime, calamities keep occurring: defections, a case of rabies, a Malaria attack for Michael, a blizzard, and a cold front so icy that trees start to explode. On the plus side, all these things bring Michael and Elizabeth closer together. Elizabeth finally decides that they have had "enough" (270), in more ways than one, and that it's time to return home. Overnight, however, a savage attack occurs. Michael and Elizabeth escape, but are followed by determined enemies. In a fight to the finish, it is Michael's instincts and skills as a soldier and hunter that win in the end. – Olmstead depicts a violent, unreasonable world full of cruel injustice where good and evil, life and death, beauty and ugliness are inseparably intertwined. The author does not even attempt a theodicy to explain the existence of evil. How do you navigate such a world? It does not seem possible to maintain your innocence and purity. In fact, the better your adjustment, the greater your culpability. The Methodist preacher who does play a role in the book is a sad, hypocritical caricature whom no one can take seriously. Is the savage world Olmstead depicts the past we hail from, or is it the inhospitable future we are heading toward? It very much remains to be seen.

### **OWU Hires Women's Rowing Coach**

OWU has announced the hiring of Andriel Doolittle as Head Coach of Women's Varsity Crew. Doolittle was Assistant Women's Rowing Coach and Recruitment Coordinator at Bates College in Maine. She joined OWU on Nov. 13 to begin developing a women's rowing program. Doolittle is a 2012 graduate of the Univ. of Connecticut and has an M.A. degree from Wesleyan University. – Doolittle says that she is currently looking at training at O'Shaughnessy Reservoir, which OSU also uses.

### **Strand Theatre Offers Family Membership**

Delaware's Strand Theatre at 28 E. Winter St. is once again offering a \$100 family membership for the calendar year 2018. A membership entitles the family to a year of movies at matinee prices for all showtimes. The membership includes unlimited free refills, a free small popcorn for every visit, a newsletter subscription, advance notices, and other perks. Details and a form can be found on the Strand's website, [www.thestrandtheatre.net](http://www.thestrandtheatre.net). – The Strand is currently showing "Coco," "Justice League," and "Wonder." "Star Wars – The Last Jedi" is coming Dec. 14.

### **The Veterans Service Commission**

Welcome to the Delaware County Veterans Service Office at 149 N. Sandusky St.! The Veterans Service Office and Veterans Service Commission (VSC) exist to provide services to qualified veterans residing in Delaware County. ***Of primary importance to the VSC is the provision of the basic necessities of life to veterans and their dependents.*** The VSC was established to assist veterans and their dependents who are experiencing an unexpected hardship as a result of sickness, injury, disease; or have become destitute due to lack of employment or lack of adequate employment. The VSC provides temporary financial assistance to veterans and their dependents who qualify as determined by the commission. In addition, the VSC provides transportation for veterans who have appointments at the VA Outpatient Clinic in Columbus and the VA Marion Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Marion. The following services are available: \*Assistance in applying for benefits administered by the VA. Benefits include VA Health Care, Service Connected Disability, VA Pension and many other valuable benefits. Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. \*Emergency financial assistance. This is usually in the form of utility, food & rent payments on behalf of the veteran. Assistance is available for other emergencies on a case-by-case basis. Information and guidance in obtaining aid from various federal, state & local organizations. \*Referrals to other agencies for assistance as determined by counseling. \*Assistance with dependents applications for benefits upon the death of the veteran. \*Assistance

with other matters as is possible based on the need of the claimant. The website is [www.delawarecountyvsc.org](http://www.delawarecountyvsc.org).

### **Carolyn Heffelfinger Paintings (through 12/23)**

WORK OF ART, a pop-up gallery at 26 N. Sandusky St., continues to feature over 70 works by Sunbury artist Carolyn Heffelfinger. (The gallery also features a selection of jewelry pieces made by Shirley Turrell-Nevada.) Heffelfinger has painted professionally for 25 years. Most of her oil paintings are inspired by her love of nature and many were painted within Delaware County. You will see all kinds of animals and plants. Heffelfinger knows her birds by name, and only a true nature lover would be aware that skunk cabbage is one of the first plants in spring. WORK OF ART opened Nov. 1 and runs through Dec. 23. A reception took place Nov. 3. Gallery hours are Wed. – Fri., 11 am – 5 pm, and Sat., 10:30 am – 6 pm. Many additional paintings can be seen through “Google Images” or on Heffelfinger’s own website ([www.cjhartist.com](http://www.cjhartist.com)).

### **Hygge Comes to Delaware**

The Scandinavian “hygge” movement has spread in the U.S. and is now making an appearance in Delaware as well. The Main Library is holding two “hygge” parties in December – one for teens on Wed., Dec. 13 (6 pm), and another one for adults on Sat., Dec. 30 (10:30 am), entitled “Get Cozy Like the Danish.”



### **Stratford Ecological Center in 2018**

The Stratford Ecological Center at 3083 Liberty Rd. is planning the following events for 2018: 1. Maple Sugar Days, Sat., Feb. 17 + 24; Maple Sugar Pancake Breakfast, March 3 (registration required); 2. Llama & Sheep Shearing Day, April 21; 3. Harvest Fair, Sept. 22. Their website is [www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org](http://www.stratfordecologicalcenter.org).

### **Bob Tanner Paintings at Gallery 22 (11/3-12/22)**

Paintings by talented Ohio plein-air artist Bob Tanner are on display at Gallery 22 (22 E. Winter St.) from Nov. 3 through Dec. 22. The theme is “Water: Thirst for Art.” A reception took place Nov. 3. To learn about Tanner, visit [www.bobbannerart.com](http://www.bobbannerart.com).

### **Grace Clinic Delaware**

Many residents don't seem to have heard of Grace Clinic Delaware, located at 40 S. Franklin St. right at the foot of OWU. For 7 years, the clinic operated in Andrews House before it moved to its own, independent location in 2014 or so. Grace Clinic Delaware is a free medical ministry that serves uninsured and underinsured members of our community with free medical appointments, prescription assistance, and specialist appointments. It relies on the generosity of over 130 doctors, nurses, specialists, pharmacists, non-medical volunteers, and the support of the community to accomplish its mission. The medical staff provides basic medical care to those who would otherwise not have access to it in a loving, compassionate, and non-threatening way. The patient's illness will be addressed by considering their physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, and social needs. The hours and services of Grace Clinic Delaware are limited, and the level of care is not that of a primary health-care provider. However, the services are free for anyone who meets the financial guidelines (200% of the federal poverty level). The specific income levels per week, month, and year can be found on the internet. Funding comes from a multitude of public, corporate, and private sources, incl. United Way of Delaware County. The Monday morning (9 am) and Wednesday night (5:30 pm) clinics are walk-in. Appointments are required for the Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday specialist visits (dental, vision, nutrition, women's health, podiatry, physical therapy, and chiropractic) as well as for the Tuesday nutrition classes. For appointments, call 740-816-6955 (ext. 2) or email [nicole@graceclinic.org](mailto:nicole@graceclinic.org). – One resident wrote on Grace Clinic Delaware's Facebook page a while back: “I am sooo grateful for Grace Clinic Delaware!!! I was having severe back / hip pain and I do not

have any insurance. Someone suggested Grace Clinic to me and I went. Six months later... I have a new hip!! Thank you, Grace Clinic and all of their staff / volunteers for their kind and compassionate words of encouragement!!!! A true blessing to Delaware County!” – Grace Clinic Delaware is operated by Grace Clinics of Ohio, which also runs a clinic in the Linden area of Columbus that is open Saturday mornings (2052 Cleveland Ave.).



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

Michael Newcomb from Zion United Church of Christ at 51 W. Central Ave. has confirmed that the church will once again provide “A Place of Warmth” for single homeless men this winter. A first volunteer training session is planned for Thurs., Dec. 7 (7-8 pm). Details are unchanged from last year: the center will be open any time the temperature is predicted to drop to 20°F or below during the night. It accepts guests from 8-10 pm who may stay until 8 am the following morning. The Center does not accept homeless women, but will help them find a suitable place.



### **Benchmark Woodworks Co.**

A privately held local company, Benchmark Woodworks in Delaware, was recently in the news for having done all the millwork (woodwork) for the new courthouse on N. Sandusky St. The public has an opportunity to view their exquisite craftsmanship at the court's open house on Sun., Dec. 3 (2-4 pm). Benchmark Woodworks was founded in 1983 and currently occupies a 43,000-square-foot facility at 75 Curtis St. The number of employees can be as high as 20, but typically it seems to be somewhat lower. Daniel (“Dan”) C. Witt is President of the family-owned company, Tiffany Witt is Vice President. The corporation is a member of the local Chamber of Commerce. Benchmark is a versatile company that manufactures unique and customized wood, plastics, and metal store fixtures to retailers all over the U.S. (e.g., hotels & restaurants) and provides architectural millwork and casework for commercial construction projects. From computer-aided CAD drawings and estimating a job through engineering, production, finishing, delivery, and installation, Benchmark's product managers and engineers follow a job through the entire process to ensure that specifications and expectations are met. The shop uses precise CNC manufacturing equipment as well as traditional wood-working machines. The company also handles paints, veneers, laminates, and other finishes, with durability guaranteed. The Delaware shop is set up for wood fabrication only. However, they have relationships with industry partners and vendors in other disciplines with whom they collaborate to furnish their customers with complete turnkey packages that often include metal, stone, solid surface, plastics, and upholstery. Benchmark clients through the years have included American Eagle Outfitters, Marshall Retail Group, Alfred Angelo Bridal, Fitch, WD Partners, Mortons of Chicago Steakhouse, DSW Shoe Warehouse, Nylo Hotels, California Pizza Kitchen & others. The company's website is [www.benchmarkwoodworks.com](http://www.benchmarkwoodworks.com). Their online gallery depicts several examples of reception rooms, lobbies, lounges, and other public areas. There is also an attractive printed brochure available at the facility. The above image shows a customized project (a coffee booth) in the basement of OWU's University Hall.

### **Pure-N-Simple Natural Foods**

Pure-N-Simple is a health-food store in downtown Delaware, located at 23 W. Winter St. between Choffey's and Fundamentals. Pure-N-Simple is reminding customers to keep the store in mind for unique presents this holiday season. Gift cards are available. Also, the



store continues to sell the same baked goods it offered at the local farmers' markets this summer. Chakra classes with Alice Drew Yoder are continuing and will finish with the 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> Chakra held both on Dec. 21 (6:30-8:15 pm). The cost is \$15. Please RSVP by calling 740-369-8917 or by emailing [puresimple@frontier.com](mailto:puresimple@frontier.com). In January 2018, Alice will offer an exciting new series, so stay tuned.

### **"Rebel Toys" Coming Soon**

A sign at 20 S. Sandusky St. says that "Rebel Toys" would be coming to downtown Delaware "soon." The store will feature modern and vintage, collectible toys from the 1940s through today. We have not been able to find any additional information. At last check, there was no activity inside the business.



### **Liberty Coins Owner Tomaso Has Died**

Doing some research on the John Birch Society, "Community Matters" stumbled into an obituary for John Michael Tomaso (1955-2017). Somehow, we missed the news that Tomaso passed away on June 9 after a brief battle with cancer. He was well known in Delaware. He served in the U.S. Army military intelligence, studied history at OSU, and became an expert in numismatics. He was proprietor of Liberty Coins in downtown Delaware for many years and passionately spoke up at City Council at least once. In 2016, he won a lawsuit against the State of Ohio over the Precious Metals Dealers Act. His obituary says, "Mike served on the field staff of the John Birch Society for many years." His "Liberty Heritage Centre" was often used for meetings for the local JBS. In 2013, he actively supported the controversial candidacy of JBS member Teri Owens for City Council. In 2014, Andrew Brenner's wife Sara Marie Brenner spoke at the Liberty Freedom Centre. Kris Jordan is another conservative politician who has spoken at JBS events. – Normalizing and legitimizing the John Birch Society, as it is routinely done in Delaware County, is in our view not appropriate. You cannot be "a man of character" and at the same time believe in the hateful, far-right propaganda promoted by JBS, which even William F. Buckley and other conservatives denounced as a dangerous ultra-right fringe group decades ago.

### **Roadkill: A Grim Death Toll**

There are many things that are never reported in the anthropocentric news media. One of them is the grim toll of road kill. Dead song birds, domestic cats and dogs, deer, ducks, frogs and toads, geese, groundhogs (as gophers / woodchucks are called around here), muskrats, opossums, rabbits, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, and turtles can be found on Delaware's streets. Dead squirrels are a common sight; sometimes you encounter two or three lifeless bodies on the same walk. Some critters are rarer sights than others. A great horned owl, a turkey vulture, and a colorful woodpecker were found last summer. Although there are plenty of coyotes around, we have never spotted a deceased one within city limits. They are indeed smart canines. Whenever we find a dead animal in the road, we remove it and say a brief kaddish. They are our brethren and should not be treated like debris, to be hit over and over again until they are flat as pancakes. We urge motorists to slow down and watch for animals and children, pedestrians and bicyclists.

## **DELAWARE COUNTY & CENTRAL OHIO**

### **An Environmental Consortium**

Efforts are underway to create an environmental consortium that would involve Otterbein, MTSO, OWU, and OSU-Marion. Terry Hermesen from Otterbein College has played the lead role in this respect. The current plan is to have a "working summit" on Jan. 20 at Stratford Ecological Center to discuss what the four institutions are already doing, how they might work together, and how they might take their efforts further. Topics will include energy, infrastructure, climate change, food & agriculture, nature conservation & restoration, environmental literacy, networking, community engagement, MORPC's "Sustainable2050" plan, and more. Well-known environmentalist David

Orr from Oberlin College has agreed to be the keynote speaker. Given the size of Stratford's main meeting room, the workshop is limited to about 100 participants. It will be open to invited members of the four institutions, people in city and county administration, and non-profit organizations interested in climate-change issues and sustainability.

### **County Commissioners Approve Trail Plan**

At their 11/27 meeting, the three Delaware County Commissioners approved the countywide trail plan that the Delaware County Trails Committee (DCTC) has been working on since 2016. An open house was held Nov. 2 during which residents were able to inspect maps of the proposed multipurpose trails and to provide feedback. The next step is approval from MORPC's Central Ohio Greenways. The plan does not include any funding mechanisms. ODNR and ODOT will be approached at a later point. Grants usually come with a requirement of a local funds match.

### **Older Homeowners Report Troubles**

According to a survey by HomeAdvisor, 41% of homeowners age 75 and older have tripped or fallen in their home; 36% said they had to rely on others to perform certain tasks they used to do; and 21% indicated they are leaving their home less frequently than they used to. One out of four homeowners also stated that they were unable to access part of their home anymore. Almost half of those surveyed said they had made certain upgrades to make it easier to live in their homes as they were aging. However, not everyone has the funds to do so. Working with MORPC, both Delaware and Franklin County have now started projects to make the community friendlier and safer for senior citizens. (We will report about it more in an upcoming issue of "Community Matters.")

The Delaware General Health District (DGHD) is aware of the problem of falls and injuries and has collected some data. The average age of older people reporting to the ER because of falls is 79.5 years. Since women live longer than men, 66% are female and 34% are male. The Health District is dedicated to the prevention of accidental injury and death to individuals of all ages, including older adults. It offers home-safety checks and fall-prevention programs in an effort to make homes safer and to allow independent living. SourcePoint has a sliding fee scale for necessary safety modifications and/or upgrades, based on need and income. Abby Crisp is in charge of the program; she can be reached at DGHD (1-3 W. Winter St.), by emailing ([acrisp@delawarehealth.org](mailto:acrisp@delawarehealth.org)), or by calling (740-) 203-2030.

### **Preservation Parks Observes Winter Hours**

Preservation Parks of Delaware County has switched to winter hours. From Nov. 1 through Feb. 28 the parks are open to the public 8 am – 7 pm. – Even in winter, there is much to observe and discover in the parks. The fallen leaves allow for better visibility, and animal tracks in the snow are fascinating.

### **Preservation Parks Takes "Flight"**

Preservation Parks of Delaware County is looking for educational presentations and possible exhibits for 2018 on all things that fly, incl. but not limited to bugs, birds, bats, kites, soap bubbles, hot air balloons, airplanes, etc. If you or your organization offer any displays, programs, or demonstrations, they would love to hear from you! "Adventures in Flight" will include both indoor exhibitions and outdoor activities. Send an email to [csmith@preservationparks.com](mailto:csmith@preservationparks.com) with details and contact information. – How about a kite or boomerang competition? A soap-bubbles festival? Is there demand for a zip line in one of the parks? Despite their popularity, we would advise against the public use of drones in the park system.

### **Delaware County Bird Club**

The Delaware County Bird Club continues to meet once a month at Deer Haven Park (4183 Liberty Rd.) On Mon., Dec. 11 (6:30 pm), Dr. Rich Bradley (OSU) will present a preview of the annual Delaware Reservoir Christmas Bird Count. On Mon., Jan. 22 (6:30 pm), Dr. Angelika Nelson (OSU) will discuss "Birding on Hog Island, Maine." On Mon., Feb. 26 (6:30 pm), Tom & Rosemary Domin will give a talk on "Raptors Nesting in Central Ohio." The couple has been particularly interested in owls.



### **Historical Society Announces 2018 Programs**

The Delaware County Historical Society has announced its 2018 public events. The list is below. Unless otherwise noted, all events are on Wednesdays at 7 pm at the Barn at Stratford, 2690 Stratford Rd. For details, visit [www.delawareohiohistory.org](http://www.delawareohiohistory.org).

Thurs., Jan. 18: Famous Firsts in History – Steve Bemiller; Feb. 7: Delaware Home on Underground Railroad; March 14: Earthworks & American Indians in Central Ohio – Brad Lepper; April 11: Sports Venues in Delaware County – Brent Carson; May 16: History of Newspapers in Delaware County – Benny Shoults / Andrew Carter; June 13: Railroads in Delaware County – Jack Hilborn; July 11: Floods in Delaware County – Brent Carson; Aug. 8: A Walk Down East Winter Street – Benny Shoults (registration & fee required); Sun., Oct. 7 (2 pm): Oak Grove Cemetery Walk (with re-enactors; registration & fee required); Oct. 10: The Spanish Flu Epidemic & Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Medicine in Delaware – Dr. Alice Frazier; Tues., Nov. 13: Delaware County Historical Society Annual Meeting & Hayes Presidential Library & Museums – Christie M. Weininger.

### **Delaware County Historical Society**

The Historical Society has started to collect material for an exhibition on Delaware County's distinguished women – women who were born here and/or who lived here. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and even throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, men were in control. However, some remarkable women succeeded in breaking through the glass ceiling as educators and librarians, artists and writers, religious and civic leaders. Some are alive and working today. We are not sure if being deceased is a requirement to be included in Delaware County's Women's Hall of Fame, but we applaud the general idea of celebrating the achievements of women.



### **"Survive to Thrive" Bow Making**

Here is an item listed on eventbrite that caught our attention – a day-long local workshop where you learn to make and shoot your own longbow. The workshop will be conducted by David Mead, the creator of the "Mead Longbow." The workshop is scheduled for Sat., Jan. 20, and is priced at \$199. The listing provides no location, but similar workshops in the past were conducted at Camp Lazarus on State Rt. 23 S. – "Survive & Thrive," "Survive to Thrive," "S2T" appears to be a national organization that focuses on survival skills. We don't know anything about their philosophy, but generally speaking "preppers" tend to have conservative political agendas. The website of Kentucky-based David Mead mentions that the primary purpose of his longbows is to hunt and to provide food. It also says he is the author and illustrator of "several survival guides."

### **Daily Stormer / Andrew Anglin**

The whereabouts of Andrew Anglin, the editor of the neo-Nazi website "The Daily Stormer," are unknown. Several parties are looking for him so that they can serve him with court papers. Dean Obeidallah, a U.S.-born comedian, columnist, and radio show host, says he was falsely accused by Anglin of being the mastermind behind a terrorist attack. A Montana woman is suing Anglin for orchestrating an anti-Semitic trolling campaign against her family. A federal judge in Columbus, Magistrate Elizabeth A. Preston Deavers, has now denied a request to ask Anglin's father and brother under oath if they know where he is living. Deavers also refused to authorize subpoenas for services that Anglin uses, such as internet-service providers, domain

registrars, web hosts, or banks. – If Andrew Anglin were an Islamic extremist, there would be no hesitation to investigate, subpoena, and prosecute him to the fullest extent of the law. Politicians would insist on it. However, it seems there is considerable reluctance to investigate and prosecute right-wing extremists although they are equally dangerous. Anglin's named his racist and anti-Semitic website "The Daily Stormer" after the Nazi publication "Der Stürmer."

### **"Hillbilly Elegy" Author J.D. Vance – \$**

J. D. Vance, the author of the bestselling book "Hillbilly Elegy," is holding a fundraiser for the "Ohio Coalition for Open Government" nonprofit in Columbus, Ohio. The event will take place Wed., Dec. 6 (5-6:30 pm) in the Ohio Statehouse Atrium. To purchase tickets, go to [www.ohioopengov.com/fundraiser](http://www.ohioopengov.com/fundraiser). Ticket prices are \$40 (event only), \$65 (incl. author-signed book, \$100 (incl. OCOG membership), and \$250 (incl. reception with Vance). The Ohio Coalition for Open Government (OCOG) is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit which serves as a clearing house for media and citizen grievances that involve open meetings & open records. The activities of the coalition include monitoring government officials for open government compliance, filing "amicus" briefs in lawsuits, litigation & public education. – The author of "Hillbilly Elegy" is a moderate Republican with a law degree who is said to have political ambitions himself. As a matter of principle, however, "Community Matters" is opposed to pay-to-play schemes. People should not have to pay between \$40 and \$250 to meet and greet a future politician.

### **Wes Goodman Resigns in Disgrace**

It was national news when Ohio State Rep. Wesley Goodman, R-Cardington, resigned after "inappropriate conduct" involving a male in a consensual situation in his Riffe Center office. Let's be clear on one thing – sexuality is a powerful, natural, and necessary thing, on at least the same level as eating, drinking, and sleeping. It is one of the greatest gifts given to us. To deny and suppress its existence will always come back to haunt you, as Freud and others well knew. There is nothing "inappropriate" about eating, drinking, sleeping, and being sexually active as long as it is done in a non-predatory and consensual way. If Goodman is heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, or transsexual, that is 100% his personal business. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a gay lifestyle. – What is disturbing and indeed inexcusably "inappropriate," however, is his total dishonesty and deception, sanctimoniousness and hypocrisy. Goodman claimed to be a God-fearing conservative Republican, upholding conservative principles, family values, the Christian faith, biblical tenets, etc. Needless to say, he is also a proud member of the NRA and the Buckeye Firearms Association. Most recently, he and his friend Andy Brenner introduced the "Campus Free Speech Act," intended to permit right-wing radicals to speak on college campuses. It was all a charade. Unfortunately, Goodman is not the only dishonest politician leading a double life. He may not even be an exception. Underneath the veneer of too many, there is naked lust, greed, gluttony, careerism, and egotism.

### **Columbus Provides Legal Aid in Deportation Cases**

The City of Columbus has established a legal-aid fund for immigrants facing deportation. City Council voted in October to make available \$185,000 to three organizations that provide legal services intended to keep immigrants and their families together. \$157,000 will go to Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE), an arm of Legal Aid of Western Ohio. Smaller amounts go to the Council on American-Islamic Relations and Catholic Social Services' Our Lady of Guadalupe Center. The national nonprofit policy organization Vera Institute of Justice will reportedly provide the additional amount of \$100,000. Councilwoman Elizabeth Brown said in a statement: "We are sending a signal here tonight. We value our immigrants. We welcome you. We know that the demonization of immigrants throws them into the shadows and makes a class of silent victims. We won't allow it."

### **Columbus Zoo Receives OEPA Award**

The Ohio EPA has honored Columbus Zoo and Aquarium with a platinum-level "Encouraging Environmental Excellence" (E3) recognition. The award recognizes businesses, industries, trade associations, professional organizations, and local governments in Ohio for their commitment to excellence in environmental stewardship.



Between 2015 and 2016, the zoo reduced its electricity and natural gas consumption by 13%. Instead of sending waste to the landfill, it now diverts, recycles, and composts 73% of it. Last year, the zoo hired its first sustainability director (Barbara Revard, a long-time employee). The "My House" exhibit teaches visitors about nature, recycling, conservation, wildlife-friendly gardening, and using fewer disposable items. The Columbus Zoo is also associated with "The Wilds" as well as with conservation projects in the African states of Congo, Kenya, and Namibia. – Loveland-based Washing Systems LLC is the only other recipient of the platinum-level "Encouraging Environmental Excellence" award in Ohio so far. To learn more about the award, go to [www.epa.ohio.gov/ocapp/ohioe3](http://www.epa.ohio.gov/ocapp/ohioe3).

### **MORPC's "Sustainable2050" Plan**

With great fanfare, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) launched "Sustainable2050" at the Summit on Sustainability on Nov. 14 in Columbus. However, MORPC's Associate Planner Rachael Beeman informs us that "Sustainable2050" is not a new plan but a continuation of the organization's 10-year-old "GreenPact" and its "Regional Sustainability Agenda." The data and recommendations contained in these documents provide guidelines to MORPC's members, incl. the City of Delaware and Delaware County. A series of follow-up meetings is planned for 2018 (1/11, 4/12, 6/14, 9/13, and 12/13).



### **The Politics of Rain Gardens**

In Columbus, the city has installed hundreds of so-called rain gardens in Clintonville as part of the new plan to deal with stormwater runoff. The rain gardens are designed to retain stormwater and to help prevent flooding downstream. Water filtration is also part of the rationale. These rainscapes or aquascapes are an important part of green infrastructure. – However, there have been complaints about the natural look of rain gardens. Some residents call them unkempt and an aesthetic eyesore. Instead of the neatly trimmed and manicured "garden" they might have envisioned, they see a jungled mess full of weeds and thistles. It is also possible to find trash in them that either was washed in or that people tossed from their cars. Once a city has hundreds and thousands of such rain gardens, it is impossible to keep them all beautiful forever. At the end of the growing season there will be dead plants, and in winter the ploughs will fill the ditches with snow and ice. – The word "garden" is a misnomer. The intention is good, but it creates expectations that cannot be met, leading to disappointment and frustration. Rain gardens are beautiful only to naturalists and engineers, not to ordinary citizens. To them, they look more like a ditch, with weeds growing in it. Perhaps another, more practical and neutral term can be found: aquatic feature, bioswale, micro pond, rain collector, storm guard, water basin, etc. A term is needed that does not evoke a dandelion-free lawn or a flower bed with red rose bushes.

### **Denison University Installs Solar Panels**

A number of Ohio colleges are using solar-panel arrays to produce energy, incl. Antioch, Cedarville, Oberlin, and Ohio Northern. Denison Univ. in Granville has now joined their ranks with a large fenced-in solar-panel array consisting of 6,750 individual panels that can generate up to 2.3 megawatts of electricity. It will be able to generate 15% of the campus' energy. The solar arrays are owned by AEP and maintained by Third Sun Solar, so the costs for Denison were minimal. – The college also has a smaller solar-panel array that sits on campus and is used for teaching purposes and class projects.

## **OHIO**

### **Ohio Community Rights Amendment**

The home-rule principle of local communities in Ohio has been systematically undermined by corporate interests. Recent examples are fracking, minimum wages, gun laws, predatory lending, puppy mills, wireless-equipment locations, and a host of other issues.

Local communities are prohibited from touching any of these things, which often compromises the health, welfare, and safety of humans and the environment. This had led to multiple lawsuits, including some of which the City of Delaware is involved. Activists in Ohio are now pushing to restore rights to communities. Following the example of other states, ballot efforts to pass an Ohio Community Rights Amendment are now underway. Stay tuned for details.

### **Land Banks in Ohio**

Ohio passed land-bank legislation in 2009, and land banks are now being created all over Ohio. The total number is 48 as of this year, which is the majority of the state's 88 counties, according to the "Columbus Dispatch" (11/11). Columbus has now 1,834 distressed properties in its land bank, up 300 from two years ago. The land bank of Toledo and Lucas County set a goal of demolishing or rehabilitating 1,500 properties over 1,500 days. Proponents of urban land banks say that the Neighborhood Initiative Program, which uses federal money for home demolitions, has been "extremely effective" in eliminating blight. The Ohio Housing Finance Agency administers the program. Critics, however, say the OHFA is too heavily focused on blight demolition and has shown little interest in preserving homeownership and helping with the rehabilitation of existing houses and the revitalization of neighborhoods. – The City of Delaware and Delaware County do not have a land-bank program. However, both entities have made aggressive use of federal dollars available through the Neighborhood Initiative Program to demolish a steady number of homes every year. The City's proposed 2018 budget states that "the removal of blighted and condemned properties" remains a top goal, but makes no mention of rehabilitation and affordable housing. There are investors who would love to buy and restore existing homes, but the process to acquire land-bank properties is time-consuming and cumbersome.

### **OEFFA Meets in Dayton (2/9-11)**

The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA), formed in 1979, is holding its 39<sup>th</sup> annual conference from Thurs. through Sat., Feb. 15-17, at the Dayton Convention Center, 22 E. 5<sup>th</sup> St., which is the same venue as last year. The OEFFA is 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. Keynote speakers will be Jeff Moyer ("Organic No-Till Farming") and Stacy Malkan ("Not Just a Pretty Face"). Plus, there are various pre-conference programs, workshops, a trade show, seed swaps, book sales, networking opportunities, entertainment, food vendors, child care, etc. This is a great conference, but participation is not cheap. We are told that one way to get in for free is by volunteering. For more info, visit [www.oeffa.org](http://www.oeffa.org).

### **Will Richard Cordray Run for Governor?**

Former Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray announced on 11/15 that after 5 years in office he would resign from the Consumer Financial Protection Agency by the end of November. His term was to expire in summer 2018. Cordray's announcement was not unexpected. Republicans have been calling on President Trump to fire the Democrat for months. It is widely expected that Cordray will run for Ohio Governor in 2018 and that he will make an announcement very soon. His resignation was welcomed on the right because it gives Trump a free hand to replace him with a more docile person. (Mick Mulvaney will be interim director after Cordray. As a Republican Congressman, he introduced legislation to shut down the CFPB. Long-term, Todd Zywicki is mentioned as a candidate.) Critics on the left said that Cordray's resignation was premature and would hand the President a golden opportunity to dismantle the watchdog institution that has long been a thorn in his side. – Cordray has been a tireless advocate for Main Street instead of Wall Street. He is a man of integrity, and we therefore agree with Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown's assessment that "all Americans owe him a debt of gratitude."

### **Criminal-Justice Reform in Ohio**

State corrections director Gary Mohr says Ohio send too many low-level offenders to prison, often for nothing more than minor and trivial probation violations. It costs on average \$72 a day to house one of the 51,000 prisoners that Ohio typically has. In total, the system costs the state about \$1.8 billion per year. Mohr believes that it

would be a better investment to help at-risk people earlier in their lives by addressing employment, behavioral health, and substance-abuse issues. He also says that community programs are twice as effective and only one-third of the cost compared to incarceration. Lastly, he is advocating for mandatory sentencing for serious felonies such as murder and rape only, but not for misdemeanors and low-level felonies. Tough-on-crime prosecutors and politicians see things differently, however. They are fond of creating ever harsher rules and inventing new offenses. A 24-member "Justice Reinvestment" committee is scheduled to submit a report and recommendations to the General Assembly by fall 2018, but under the circumstances it is hard to imagine that meaningful criminal-justice reform in Ohio will happen any time soon.



### **Ohio's Algae "Action Plan"**

Ohio has a huge and growing algae problem. Earlier this summer, a harmful algae bloom covered more than 1,000 square miles in the western basin of Lake Erie – the third-largest ever. The algae blooms contain cyanobacteria, which can produce toxins that are harmful to people and animals. Dangerous levels of the toxin caused Toledo to shut down the drinking water supply to half a million residents in 2014. The algae blooms also hurt the tourism industry. The problem is by no means limited to Lake Erie. An OSU study released this year calculated algae blooms at Buckeye Lake and Grand Lake St. Mary's have cost homeowners \$152 million in lost property value. – The science is perfectly clear. Most of the increase in the size of the blooms can be attributed to dissolved farm phosphorus and nitrogen flowing into the lake, the Maumee River being the largest tributary to any of the Great Lakes. What remains murky is the politics. Agriculture continues to be big in Ohio, and no legislator wants to be called "an enemy of the people." After at least a decade of inaction, the State of Ohio has now finally released its "Domestic Action Plan 1.0." Its stated goal is to cut Lake Erie's nutrient load by 40% by 2025. While that may sound good in theory, the document lacks direction and specificity. It reads as a statement of intention rather than a concrete plan with benchmarks, budgets, timelines, and enforcement measures. Researchers have expressed frustration that their science was largely excluded. Former head of the OEPA's Division of Surface Water, George Elmaraghy, says "it seems that they did not make any meaningful changes." The politicians may understand the magnitude of the problem, but they are too timid to boldly confront it and make the required changes, i.e., pass mandatory rules to change farming methods. Instead, they are kicking the can down the road. Under the circumstances, it seems unlikely that the 2025 goal (a 40% reduction of Lake Erie's nutrient load) will be met. Ohio's lakes will remain green instead of blue for decades to come.

### **MaLaren Is New Director of "TourismOhio"**

Ohio has hired Matthew MaLaren as the state's new tourism director. He will start his job in January. MaLaren, an Ohio native, is a hospitality expert. He most recently served as Senior VP for the American Hotel & Lodging Association, an industry trade group.

### **Deer-Hunting Season**

Deer-hunting season in Ohio started on Monday after Thanksgiving, as it traditionally does. Mike Tonkovich from the Ohio Division of Wildlife expects that another 180,000 to 200,000 whitetail deer will be "harvested" by season's end on Feb. 4. During the 2016/17 season, hunters checked a total of 182,169 whitetails. The gun season isn't what it used to be, according to observers, as hunting has lost some its former allure, but it is still a family tradition for many. – Be careful and wear orange when you are out in the woods around this time of year. Not every hunter is a responsible and/or legal actor, and some seem to indiscriminately shoot at everything that moves.

### **A New History of Appalachia**

Steven Stoll, History Professor at Fordham Univ., has written a new book on the history of the Appalachian Mountains, "Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia" (Hill & Wang, 2017, 410 pp., \$30). Focusing on West Virginia, one of the poorest places in the U.S., the author describes the centuries-old history of extermination hunting, denuding the landscape, mining for coal and minerals, polluting the mountains, impoverishing the residents, and ruining their health. He sees "unbridled destruction and abuse" from beginning to end, typically committed by absentee landlords determined to exploit what they could and immiserating people in the process. Stoll's investigation ranges widely from history & economics to art & literature and questions our assumptions about progress and development, and exposes the devastating legacy of dispossession. The author, however, is not satisfied describing the many ills that Appalachia continues to suffer from due to no fault of its own. He is also suggesting "a way forward that includes reparations, the creation of new kinds of communities, free college tuition, and other remedies," according to a "New York Times" review of the book.



### **Fiona: International Superstar**

From the moment she was born in the Cincinnati Zoo, Baby Fiona has been a rock star on social media. She is the reigning queen nationally and internationally, making people "feeling hip." Crowds lose their minds when she shows up. Fiona was born, six weeks early and weighing only 29 pounds, on Jan. 24, and no one expected the preemie hippo her to survive. However, she is now almost one year old and 500 pounds heavy. Her mother is 18-year-old Bibi, her father Henry who has since died at age 36. By beating the odds, Fiona has become "a symbol of resilience and positivity," a much-needed antidote in these perilous times. In the bad-news industry, she has become a good-news ambassador. Fiona is something everyone can agree on – a rare phenomenon in the country. What President Trump could not do, Fiona is doing it – bringing the Disunited States of America together. Perhaps she should run for president in 2020. Already a book has been written about the toddler ("Saving Fiona: The Story of the World's Most Famous Baby Hippo," out in spring 2018), and there are thousands of Fiona-based merchandise items available.

## **NATION**

### **How Do Other Nations See the U.S.?**

Countries around the world have been issuing a spate of travel advisories, warning their citizens about the risk of traveling to the United States. Natural disasters such as hurricanes in the southeast and wildfires in the west are certainly part of the spike. Then there are warnings against traveling to states with Zika, Malaria, or other tropical diseases. However, there are other reasons as well. Countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom are all deeply concerned about the ubiquitous presence of firearms in the U.S., the frequency of violent crimes, politically motivated attacks, and the potential for mass killings. Bahamians were recently advised to be aware of shootings of young black males by police officers. For the better or worse, this is now the image of America abroad – a country awash in firearms where shootings are a daily occurrence and international travelers are no longer safe.

### **Gun Deaths Rising**

The rate of gun deaths in the U.S. rose from 11 per 100,000 people in 2015 to 12 per 100,000 people in 2016. The rates for the first quarter of 2017 also show an upward trend compared with the same 3-month period last year. More than 33,000 people die in firearm-related deaths in the U.S. every year, according to the CDC, and the numbers continue to rise. Suicides account for about 60%,

homicides for about 36%. Unintentional firearm deaths and those related to law-enforcement officials account for about 1.3%. The rest is undetermined. – The death rate from heart disease (196 per 100,000 people) and cancer (185 per 100,000 people) is of course much higher, but one clear difference is that gun-related deaths are obviously preventable. Just like drug overdoses, gun deaths are a major public-health problem. It is sad and tragic that almost nothing is being done about it, however. Just like drug overdoses, gun deaths constitute a major public-health problem. In fact, America's gun addiction is just as harrowing and fatal as America's drug addiction. The country is slowly killing itself. Life expectancy is already in reverse. – Coincidentally, this entry was created on 11/5, the day of another mass shooting in America. 26 people were killed when Devin P. Kelley opened fire at a crowd celebrating Sunday mass inside the First Baptist Church of Sutherland in Texas.

### **Anti-Semitic Incidents Up by 60%**

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which has monitored anti-Semitic incidents since 1979, has reported a sharp increase in physical assaults, vandalism, and attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions in 2017. Between Jan. 1 and Sept. 30, there has been 67% increase between Jan., 1 and Sept. 30 of this year – 1,299 compared to 779 last year. (Mathematically, that amounts to a 60% increase, not 67%.) Regardless, however, it is clear that Charlottesville was not an aberration: white racists and supremacists are targeting members of the Jewish community and Jewish institutions every day. Perhaps most troubling, ADL director Jonathan A. Greenblatt notes a significant spike of anti-Semitic bullying and vandalism in K-12 schools and on college campuses across the U.S. He fears that the statistics don't paint a full picture of what is happening. "Many school-based incidents still go unreported."

### **Black Men Get Harsher Sentences**

The U.S. Sentencing Commission has issued a new report on sentencing disparities. It concludes that black men who commit the same crimes as white men receive federal prison sentences that are on average almost 20% longer. The disparity has increased, not decreased, in recent years after the Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. Booker* in 2005 that gave judges more discretion.

### **Attacks against Transgender People on the Rise**

Violence against transgender people, especially against black and Hispanic women, has risen. They have been shot, stabbed, burned, and drowned. There is an increased climate of hate crimes against LGBT people in general as well. The full death toll is impossible to establish because there is no central database, and trans folk are often not identified as such. The Trump Administration has rescinded federal protections for transgender students. It is also trying to bar transgender people from serving in the military and to eliminate workplace-discrimination protections against trans folk. It seems it is open-hunting season against members of the LGBT community. When transphobia mixes with misogyny and racism, the toxic mixture can have fatal consequences.

### **"L'état c'est moi"**

"L'état c'est moi," said French King Louis XIV in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: "The state – that's me" or "I am the state." Obviously, that's the philosophy of an unenlightened absolute monarch who holds all the power in his hands. The Sun King was jury, judge, and executioner at the same time. President Trump often makes similar declarations. According to the "Washington Post," he recently stated: "Let me tell you, the one that matters is me. I'm the only one that matters." It does not appear that President Trump has ever accepted that the government derives its power from the people, and that the U.S. Constitution describes three branches of government. His impatience and dissatisfaction with the legislative and the judicial branches is well known. "I alone," he seems to believe, can solve the problems of America and the world, and therefore "I alone" should be in charge. – We prefer the words of Prussian King Frederick II (Frederick the Great) who said, "Un prince est le premier serviteur de l'état" ("A ruler is the first servant of the state").

### **Trump's Sanctuary Cities Order Blocked**

A federal judge has permanently blocked President Trump's executive order to cut funding from cities that restrict cooperation with U.S. immigration authorities. The judge noted that the order was broadly written to include not just law-enforcement grants but *all* federal grants, which would be unlawful. The judge, William Orrick, also pointed out that the President himself has referred to his executive order as "a weapon" to single out and punish recalcitrant municipalities. The Dept. of Justice has said it would appeal the decision.

### **Trump Wants to Kill the Johnson Amendment**

The 1954 "Johnson Amendment" prohibits churches from politicking and endorsing political candidates. During his presidential campaign, Trump promised to "totally destroy" it. The current GOP tax plan now includes a provision that would modify the Johnson Amendment. If passed, churches would be allowed to engage in political speech and to endorse political candidates from the pulpit or during other forms of teaching. It does not free churches up entirely to participate in the political process. (Also, the proposal only applies to religious institutions and not to all tax-exempt non-profits.) Critics argue any attempt to undermine the separation of church & state and to convert houses of worship into centers of political partisan politics is misguided. The proposal is likely to lead to much litigation as it if often unclear what constitutes a "church," "teaching," "politics," and "speech."

### **Trump Exits SoHo Hotel in New York**

Eleven years ago, Donald Trump announced plans to open the luxury SoHo Hotel in New York, a 46-story building that also includes condos. The Trump Organization did not own the hotel, but it did manage it for the CIM group. Now the Trump family is abandoning the project. The hotel's main restaurant closed last April after business faltered since Trump's election in 2016, and the hotel itself has had difficulties attracting paying guests at 5-star prices. It was forced to lower rates. Sports teams and corporate guests disappeared almost entirely because staying at the hotel was seen by many as a political endorsement of Trump. Condominiums have also been slow to sell. Buyers complained they were misled by inflated sales figures, resulting in a criminal investigation. Another area of concern was the fact that the project enjoyed the backing of financiers and felons from Russia such as Felix Sater. (The Trump family has deep financial ties with Russia, Kazakhstan, and the Ukraine that go back decades.) – With the exception of the Trump International Hotel in Washington, other Trump golf resorts and hotels are also struggling. The lack of success and new deals has the Trumps exploring new ways to find revenue. This month they opened an online store ([www.trumpstore.com](http://www.trumpstore.com)) that sells expensive hats, shirts, polos, golf gear, trinkets, and other items for men, women, and children. If you are in the market for baby bibs, for example, here is your chance. An ultra-soft baby bib (in blue, pink, and white) with the Trump logo is only \$20-25, plus shipping & handling. A perfect gift for future entrepreneurs!

### **Trump's Golf Course Hires Foreigners**

President Trump is has been demonizing immigrants for years. It is interesting to note, however, that his high-end golf club in Florida, Mar-a-Lago, regularly hires foreign groundkeepers, housekeepers, waiters, and cooks. The resort just received permission to hire another 70 temporary workers from abroad, compared to 64 last year and 88 in 2014. Trump has defended the practice, saying not enough Americans apply for low-paying jobs like these. If his managers didn't recruit outside the country, "we might as well just close the doors." – Of course, the same is true for agriculture, construction, the meat-packing industry, landscaping, hotels & restaurants, and countless other industries. "Making America Great Again" cannot be accomplished without immigrant labor after all, it seems.

### **Trumpism Defeated in New Jersey and Virginia**

Democrats won the governorship in New Jersey (Philip D. Murphy) and Virginia (Ralph S. Northam) on Nov. 7. Their ascendancy is widely understood as a repudiation of President Donald Trump whose approval ratings are at a historic low. In both states, the Republican candidates attempted to raise their profile by linking immigration and crime, and by railing against "sanctuary cities." But



their message backfired. The results of these elections signal a deep alienation from Trump and the GOP among the socially moderate suburban middle class. (Ohio politicians like Josh Mandel, Jim Renacci, and Mary Taylor should take notice.) – Murphy won in New Jersey by promoting a \$15 minimum wage, gun control, and the legalization of marijuana, and by vowing to stand up to the Trump Administration.

### **Alabama Race Is Close**

In Alabama, conservative Roy S. Moore is running against Democrat Doug Jones in a special election on Dec. 12. Moore has been accused by multiple women of pursuing them when they were girls, one as young as 14, and making unwelcome advances. He also has a decades-old history of making hateful remarks about blacks, Muslims, and gays, but that is less often talked about. Establishment Republicans have abandoned Moore, fearing accusations of “child predation” will hurt the GOP for years to come. There is a chance he will not be confirmed and seated even if he does win the Senate race. He is now a national maverick, perhaps even a pariah. However, it looks like many Alabama voters and Evangelical Christians are willing to overlook his flaws. President Trump, with whom he has much in common, has also all but endorsed him. – His rival, Doug Jones, is an attorney and former federal prosecutor with strong credentials. He represents mainstream values on civil rights and climate change.

### **Cal Thomas: “The Corruption of Faith”**

Conservative columnist Cal Thomas, a man of principles, published an essay last month, “The Corruption of Faith,” which appeared in the “Delaware Gazette.” He criticized Evangelical Christians for having reached another low point when Alabama State Auditor Jim Zeigler argued that sex with underage girls is ok because that’s what happened between Joseph and Mary in the Bible. Thomas is perfectly correct: it is indeed disgraceful and shameful how some evangelical Christians have prostituted themselves and made a pact with the devil to have a seat at his table. Many indeed seem to have been tempted by worldly values, political interests, and temporal power rather than staying true to the timeless principles of the Christian faith. And Thomas is also correct to evoke the Faustian bargain German Protestantism and Catholicism made with Adolf Hitler in the 1930s. The churches failed the test, and as a result their credibility was lost after WW II. Germany is now essentially a post-Christian country. – Here is a small excerpt of what Cal Thomas wrote: “There is an unstated conceit among some evangelicals that God is only at work when a Republican is elected, even a Republican who does not share their view of Jesus, or practice what He taught. It is the ultimate compromise, which leads to the corruption and dilution of a message more powerful than what government and politics offer. German Protestantism made its own Faustian bargain in the 1930s. Theologian Gerhard Kittel joined with other Protestant leaders in a proclamation declaring Adolf Hitler “A call of God.” More like a call of Satan. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was the better example of a serious believer who confronted the Nazis with the power and truth of that other kingdom and was martyred for it.”

### **Congressional Sex Settlements Are Kept Secret**

Under a 1995 law, sexual-harassment complaints and other workplace-violation reports against members of Congress are handled confidentially. From 1997 through this year, more than \$17 million in taxpayer money has been paid to settle a total of 264 cases. Ohio Sen. Rob Portman has now criticized the secret settlements as “outrageous” and has called for more transparency. As a member of the House in 1995, Portman voted for the measure that required Congress to be covered by a number of federal laws, incl. Title VII that addresses sexual harassment. The law required the Treasury Dept. to pay for any settlements. That’s all reasonable and appropriate. However, the measure appears to have been abused to conceal sexual and other misconduct by members of Congress. We agree with Portman that Capitol Hill’s culture of secrecy over sexual harassment needs to end as long as the identity of victims who want to remain private is protected. Democrat Nancy Pelosi has also called the system of secret settlements “ridiculous.”

### **Diversity on Display**

In Virginia, Democrat Danica Roem became the first openly transgender woman in the nation to be elected and seated in a state

legislature, beating a conservative Republican who had sponsored a bill restricting the rights of transgender people. House Democratic Leader David Toscano stated, “it sends a message to politicians everywhere that the politics of bigotry is over.” – Elsewhere in the nation, too, African-Americans, Hispanics, LGBT people, and other minorities were elected to office by the dozens. Ravi Bhalla was elected mayor of Hoboken, the first Sikh to accomplish this. (His ignorant or malicious opponents promptly labeled him a “terrorist” and called for his deportation.) In Minneapolis, two black transgender women (Andrea Jenkins and Phillipe Cunningham) were elected to city council. A Hispanic woman (Michelle De La Isla) won the mayor’s race in Topeka, Kansas. A refugee from Liberia (Wilmot Collins) was elected mayor in Helena, Montana. Jenny Durkan became Seattle’s first openly lesbian mayor. The list goes on and on. Minority populations in particular feel snipped out of the American picture and are fighting back against a system that has ignored them for too long. Republicans are now worried about their prospects in 2018. Voters appear eager to punish Trump, and governors are scrambling to disassociate themselves from the unpopular President.

### **The Democratic Party**

The national Democratic Party is a sorry sight these days. It is demoralized and still licking its wounds. There is no coherent positive message and direction emanating from the old guard. However, there are plenty of positive things happening on the local and state level. Young people are on fire, eager for a change of guard. Democrats outside of Washington seem to have a better understanding of what needs to be done than those in the capital: The party would benefit from a greater focus on matters that are urgent and relevant to ordinary Americans. Folks in the middle (or aspiring to be in the middle) too often have the feeling that politicians don’t understand their struggles and don’t support and protect them. Their stories are not heard. Here are some of the topics that the Democratic Party might want to focus on in the future: jobs (incl. clean-energy and infrastructure jobs) & job training, affordable housing, health care for all, liveable wages, a clean environment, debt-free college, social & economic justice, ethnic inclusion, and community support.



### **The Keystone XL Pipeline**

All pipelines leak, and critics of the Keystone XL pipeline (pronounced “excel”) from Canada to the U.S. were right when they said that an oil spill was not a matter of “whether” but “when.” On 11/16, a major rupture occurred in South Dakota’s Marshall County, near the border with North Dakota, and some 5,000 barrels or 210,000 gallons of bitumen gushed on farmland. Luckily, no farm buildings were within a mile, and no livestock or drinking water source appeared to be affected. The cause of the leak remains under investigation. This is not the first time TransCanada’s pipelines have spilled toxic tar sands, and it won’t be the last. – The latest spill came at a critical time for the pipeline operator. Nebraska’s Public Service Commission was scheduled to announce on 11/20 whether it would approve the permit for Keystone XL as submitted or not. Some 90 ranchers and farmers were urging the authorities not to issue the permit, the last regulatory hurdle before construction of the Keystone XL can begin. Nebraska’s PSC did end up approving the pipeline in a split decision, but instead of the route preferred by TransCanada the commission authorized an alternative pathway farther to the east that the company has called unworkable. The new route circumvents much of the state’s ecologically delicate Sandhills region. – No doubt supporters of the Keystone XL pipeline will tweet that Nebraska’s decision is a victory for them. However, the future of the pipeline remains very much in doubt. The market favors natural gas these days, and investors are dubious about the need for dirty and costly tar-sand oil from Canada. Also, Wells Fargo has a public-relations problem already and may be reluctant to support the controversial project in the future. And TransCanada may have lost its appetite for going back to the drawing board.

## **Apple Is a Major Tax Evader**

"We don't stash money on some Caribbean island," Apple CEO Tim Cook said in 2013. He was not lying. The island Apple is relying on to stash money is Jersey in the English Channel. Apple has accumulated at least \$128 billion of profits in offshore tax shelters, and probably much more. The company is by no means an exception. U.S. multinationals are the global grandmasters of tax-avoidance schemes. Such creative maneuvers cost governments around the world billions and trillions of lost revenue, hurting millions of citizens whose needs cannot be met because of a lack of revenue.

## **Vietnam Veterans with Cholangiocarcinoma**

A new pilot study has found that at least 700 veterans with cholangiocarcinoma ("bile-duct cancer") have been seen by the VA in the past 15 years. Many former Vietnam veterans were infected by the slow-killing liver-fluke parasite that infects about 25 million people worldwide, mostly in Asia. It spreads through the consumption of raw or undercooked fish, but symptoms do not show up until decades later. Over time, swelling and inflammation of the bile duct can lead to cancer. The number of filed claims reached 60 in 2017 (up from 41 in 2016), but the overwhelming majority of Vietnam veterans has no awareness of the problem, is not in a position to link the disease with service in Vietnam, and has not filed a claim. Veteran Affairs says it is taking the study seriously, but tragically the VA has so far denied 80% of the cases. It says more research is needed to conclusively link someone's bile-duct cancer to service in Vietnam. – Dying veterans should not have to fight the VA to receive benefits for themselves and their spouses when the case is as clear as it is in this instance.

## **The Problem with Gender Assignment**

Most people think in binary terms, but in reality everything is on a non-binary spectrum – young and old, bright or dark, healthy or sick, clean or dirty, good and evil. Gender, too, does not always fall nicely into categories. It is a social construct and not necessarily fixed or stable. Shoehorning people into pink or blue can be a form of violence and even torture. In a 2013 report, the United Nations found that "children who are born with atypical sex characteristics are often subject to irreversible sex assignment, involuntary sterilization, [and] involuntary genital normalization surgery." After medical operations, they are often left "with permanent, irreversible infertility" as well as "severe mental suffering." The German Supreme Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht / BVerfG) has now determined that binary gender designations violate the right to privacy and bodily integrity. People who are neither male or female will henceforth enjoy legal protection. The ruling give parents of intersex kids the option to wait until the child was old enough to determine which gender, if any, to identify with. – More and more countries are either dispensing with gender designations in public documents altogether or are recognizing more than two genders on driver's licenses or passports. Countries such as Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Germany, India, Malta, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, and Thailand recognize more than two genders in their constitutions and/or on passports or national ID cards. Several U.S. states, too, have started to offer residents gender-neutral options on driver's licenses and even birth certificates. Think about it – is it really the business of government to police whether you are right-handed or left-handed, obese or skinny, male or female? – Worldwide, the intersex population is estimated to be between 0.5% and 1.7%, but that number is more a fantasy than a reality because there are zero reliable statistics.

## **Patrick Sharkey: "Uneasy Peace" (2018)**

One of the more important books in 2018 will be Patrick Sharkey's "Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence" (Norton). The book will be released Jan. 16, 2018. Sociologist Sharkey studied the reasons for the decline of violent crime in American cities, which are now safer than they have been in decades. His most astounding discovery is something that so far has been completely overlooked and unexplored by researchers and policy makers. When local nonprofits responded to crime, violence, and other problems in their cities by cleaning streets, repairing potholes, building playgrounds, establishing a credit union, holding a jazz festival, teaching children skills, and employing young men, and policing neighborhoods by themselves – that had a real impact on violence prevention and the crime rate. Using data from the

National Center for Charitable Statistics, Sharkey and his team tracked the rise in 264 cities from New York to Los Angeles over the period of more than 20 years and discovered that for every 10 additional organizations there was a 9% drop in the murder rate and a 6% drop in violent crime. Sharkey's data show that the most effective crime-fighting strategies may not be aggressive (and expensive) police tactics and mass incarceration. This negative model is broken, has come with steep costs to families and communities, and has alienated many segments of society. What might be needed instead is a positive model of crime prevention that relies more on community groups themselves. – As we all know (or should know), correlation is not causation. Community activists should take a close look at Sharkey's methodology once the book is available. However, if his conclusions hold true, a paradigm shift would be the logical next step. Cities heavily rely on their police forces to keep the peace, investing typically one-third to one-half of their operating budget in law enforcement. Delaware is a typical example where almost \$9 million go to police work, leaving inadequate amounts for road maintenance (\$150,000) and other needs. It would be wise for cities to create a better balance and to invest more in community organizations.

## **Hobby Lobby & the New Museum of the Bible**

Hobby Lobby is a privately owned, conservative arts-and-craft chain of 750 retail stores, headquartered in Oklahoma. The chain became infamous when it rejected having to pay contraceptives for its workers because it conflicted with their Christian faith. Now the current president, Steve Green (son of founder David Green), is in the news again for having amassed a \$205 million collection of some 40,000 artifacts from the Near and Middle East. The collection includes Egyptian mummies, ancient papyri scrolls, cuneiform tablets, Bibles in numerous languages, and so on. However, it turned out that there are many questions about the provenance of many of the artifacts. Numerous items seem to have been stolen and/or looted in war-torn Iraq and were illegally smuggled into the U.S. In July, Hobby Lobby settled a government lawsuit for \$3 million involving the criminal possession of stolen property and had to repatriate some 5,500 items to Iraq. International laws of patrimony prohibit the exportation of looted antiquities. It has also come to light that an unknown number of artifacts are almost certainly modern forgeries, including the Dead Sea fragments owned by Steve Green. He has long championed the construction of a Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., to house the family's collection. As a result of the scandal, the new museum, which opened Nov. 17, is now exhibiting just 2,840 vetted objects, about 7% of Hobby Lobby's total collection. To make up for the paucity of items on display, the museum has shifted its focus to more interactive, theme-park experiences. A new book, "Bible Nation: The United States of Hobby Lobby" (Princeton UP, 2017), tells the dark and tangled story of the Greens' acquisition of biblical antiquities. Ethical concerns will plague the museum and Hobby Lobby for years to come. – Contraceptives are antithetical to Hobby Lobby's biblical worldview, but it seems that pilfering, smuggling, hoarding, lying, and exhibiting forgeries are perfectly fine. "Community Matters" urges consumers not to support unethical companies, whether they align themselves with conservatism or progressivism.

## **Big Tobacco Forced to Eat Crow**

Under court order, the tobacco industry is forced to publicly admit in newspapers and on television the deadly dangers of cigarettes and other tobacco products. The new spots, which started Nov. 26, lay out the toll in unmistakable terms: "More people die every year from smoking than from murder, AIDS, suicide, drugs, car crashes, and alcohol combined." Another sentence reads, "smoking kills, on average, 1200 Americans every day." That's 438,000 preventable deaths per year, if you do the math. The ad lists R. J. Reynolds Tobacco, Philip Morris USA, Altria, and Lorillard as companies responsible for millions of fatalities over the years. The tobacco industry has yet to apologize for its decades-old history of deception and keeps denying culpability. It successfully lobbied to get a sentence removed that it "intentionally designed cigarettes with enough nicotine to create and sustain addiction." – It is not too far fetched to assume that some day other industries may suffer the same or a similar fate for lying about the true costs of their products.

## **Donating to Charities?**

There are lots of fraudulent charities and fund-me causes out there that bombard you with snailmail, phone calls, and emails. How do you know which ones are legitimate and which ones aren't? For example, Ashtabula-based "Ohio Cops for Kids" has just been unmasked as a sham, with no affiliation to any police agency. Here is one suggestion to help you determine the claims a charity makes. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) has created a website, <give.org>, also known as BBB Wise Giving Alliance, that helps you give to hundreds of trustworthy national and local charities during the holiday season and throughout the year. These Charity Seal Holders meet 20 holistic BB Charity Standards that address charity governance, results reporting, finances, and appeal accuracy. Fraud and crime cannot ever be ruled out entirely, but it can be significantly reduced by exercising caution.



### **Kidde Fire Extinguishers Recalled**

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has recalled some 40 million Kidde fire extinguishers because they may not work in an emergency. They can become clogged and may fail to spray when needed. Affected are 134 models of red, white, and silver Kidde extinguishers that are rated ABC or BC and have either plastic handles or push buttons. They were sold in the U.S. and Canada between 1973 through Aug. 15 of this year. Kidde, based in Mebane (N. Carolina), can be contacted by visiting [www.kidde.com](http://www.kidde.com). The website will guide you through the steps to identify your model.

### **New Guidelines for Blood Pressure: 130/90**

The American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology have revised their definition of high blood pressure, also called hypertension. The previous guidelines defined it as 140/90 millimeters of mercury or greater for anyone with a significant risk of heart attack or stroke. The new guidelines define high blood pressure as 130/90. The number of adults with high blood pressure will rise from 72 million to 103 million as a result. Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death among Americans. High blood pressure is second only to smoking as a preventable cause of heart attacks and strokes. Some experts worry that the new guidelines may lead to more intensive drug treatments that may increase rates of kidney disease. The best way to lower blood pressure and to stay healthier is by exercising more and eating a healthier diet.

### **Male Aggression**

Society values male aggressiveness in sports, film, finances, politics, law enforcement, the military, and so on. "Winners" are hard, tough, resilient men. Empathy, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills are for women and other "losers." Fox "News" routinely ridicules men who are said to be too "feminine." This macho attitude comes in many forms, but one of them is certainly sexual aggression, predation, and exploitation. Many men feel they have the right to take whatever they want and to treat women as chattel and sex objects to be conquered. They grope and molest, beat and even rape. (The same goes for the environment, by the way.) There are laws against such porcine behavior, but clearly many men have yet to learn to live up to the values of gender equity. As countless recent scandals have demonstrated, phallogocentric masculinity can be brutal and violent, destructive and toxic. We have to do better as a society to instill emotional literacy and compassion in boys and men. This is a long-awaited moment of reckoning. The time has come to redefine masculinity and what makes a "gentleman."

### **Katie Lee (1919-2017)**

Folk singer and conservationist Katie Lee has died at the age of 98. Born in Illinois, she grew up in the Arizona desert. She had a modest career as an actress, but found greater acclaim as a folk singer of cowboys lyrics. Songs about outlaws and murder, love and hate, poverty and injustice were her repertoire. But when the 710-foot-high Glen Canyon Dam was built in the 1950s, she found her true calling.

Together with writer Edward Abbey and Sierra Club's David Brower, she became part of an outspoken chorus of environmentalists who demanded that the canyon be restored to its former glorious beauty. "All My Rivers are Gone" (1998) is one of her books she wrote about Glen Canyon. You can hear her "Song of the Boatman" and other tunes on YouTube. Rivers should always be "wild and free," she said.

### **Krysten Ritter's Debut Novel "Bonfire" (2017)**

Young actress Krysten Ritter, 35, has just released her first novel. The protagonist of "Bonfire" is Abby Williams, an environmental lawyer in Chicago who one day returns to her humble hometown, the fictional Barrens, Indiana, to investigate a case of corruption and contamination. Like the name suggests, Barrens is a desolate place under the control of Optimal Plastics, a conglomerate intertwined in every aspect of the community. The protagonist suspects that the plastics company is responsible for the water contamination that sickens people, but proving it turns out to be a difficult and dangerous job. This is a fast-moving thriller, with a dark and disturbing plot. – One critic said that the story has been told before, which is true. But stories such as this one must be told time and again because Barrens is everywhere, perhaps even right here in our very own community.

### **Water Contamination in Plainfield Township, Michigan**

Wolverine Worldwide is a shoemaking company that manufactures a dozen footwear brands such as Hugh Puppies and Merrell. It's been a mainstay in Plainfield Township, Michigan, since 1883. For decades, the company dumped sludge and leather from its tannery in the woods and fields that surround the town north of Grand Rapids. Locals have reported 76 dump sites so far, although Wolverine Worldwide says that are not all theirs. The Rogue River, which runs through Plainfield Township, tested high for contaminants last month. Groundwater and well water has found to show excessive levels of PFAS, also known as perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances. Although the science is not yet fully researched and understood, PFAS has been linked to serious health problems as such decreased fertility, liver problems, and some forms of cancer. Several states, including Michigan, warn against eating fish with high levels of PFAS. Michigan's Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ) says it was not aware of the problem until recently and blames poor record-keeping and the loose regulations of the past. (It's the same entity that ignored the lead problem in Flint for the longest time.) – This is a typical situation in many communities. To protect jobs and revenues, authorities and even residents often turn a blind eye toward the pollution of water, air, and soil. Eventually, however, the bill always comes due. The citizens of Plainfield Township are now distressed about the health risk and fear that they will never sell their houses.



### **Police Confuse Hibiscus Plants with Marijuana**

In October, a dozen police officers in Buffalo Township in Pennsylvania's Butler County near Sarver arrived with assault rifles, handcuffed Edward Cramer (69) and Audrey Cramer (66), and kept them in a patrol car for hours after the couple was suspected of growing marijuana on their property. Turns out they were flowering hibiscus plants. No one expects the police to be master gardeners, but it seems odd that the officers were not able to tell the difference between a marijuana plant and a flowering bush. The couple was treated rudely. Guns were pointed at them, and Audrey Cramer was not even allowed to put on her pants before she was handcuffed. "I was not treated as though I was a human being," she says. Edward Cramer tried to reason with the officers and to convince them that the flowers were perfectly legal, but they did not listen. If you have ever watched law-enforcement officers on a mission, they are often dangerous, out-of-control zombies incapable of rational thought and normal speech. The traumatized couple has now filed a lawsuit against the township. Audrey Cramer says, "I'm starting to understand why a lot of the public do not trust police officers."



## **A New Netflix Series: "Dark"**

"Dark" is Netflix' first-ever original German-language series. The show debuts internationally on Dec. 1. (Another German show, "Babylon Berlin," will stream on Netflix starting in January.) The creators of "Dark" are director Baran bo Odar, 39, and the writer Jantje Friese, 40. The 10 episodes of "Dark" were inspired by the Chernobyl nuclear-power plant accident in 1986 that led to the release of radioactive material over all Europe. The catastrophe contributed to widespread suspicion of nuclear power and explains German's decision to phase out its nuclear reactors. The show takes place in the fictional village of Winden, located in the shadow of a nuclear-power plant. The story is about four families that are being sent on a frantic hunt after two children disappear and a body is found in the woods. The resulting murder mystery seems to point to the nuclear plant that people think is responsible for the town's sickness and the fact that dead birds that fall from the sky. Billed as a mystery series, "Dark" has drawn instant comparisons to Netflix's "Stranger Things." A trailer can be found on the Internet.

## **Portmanteau Words**

Delaware residents have the opportunity to skate on an artificial or synthetic "glice" surface on the first weekend in December. "Glice" is a so-called portmanteau word made up of "to glide" and "ice." Two different words are linked together to create a new meaning. Another local example is "Choffey's," made up of "Chocolate" and "coffee." Other common examples are brunch (breakfast + brunch), frenemy (friend + enemy), motel (motor + hotel), puggle (pug + beagle), racino (horse race + casino) smog (smoke + fog), spork (spoon + fork), We have seen a proliferation of such words in recent years, many of which are quite fun and innovative. Today there are hundreds and thousands of them. Many have become so mainstream that we don't even think about their origin anymore. Can you figure out the two words that make up the following portmanteau words? Affluenza, Bollywood, Brexit, bromance, burkini, emoticon, fandom, fanzine, ginormous, glitterati, guesstimate, hacktivism, hazmat, infotainment, jazzercise, labradoodle, liger, malware, manwich, mockumentary, netizen, netiquette, newscast, sexploitation, shambolic, shopaholic, sitcom, slacktivism, Reaganomics, Spanglish, stagflation, telethon, televangelist, webinar, workaholic.



## **"Pledge to Be a Lazy Gardener!"**

Now you can justify being a messy gardener. The Nature Conservancy and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have partnered and are asking urban and rural gardeners to be less eager and diligent and not to remove dead plant material from flower and vegetable gardens until the following spring. Fallen leaves, grassy reeds, dried flowers, berry bushes, fallen-off twigs & branches, tree bark, brush piles, etc., all form great habitat, shelter, and insulation for spiders and insects, reptiles and amphibians, small mammals and birds. A messy garden is a diverse one! In fact, doing nothing at all – the sloth option – is what some experts recommend. "We encourage people not to put their garden to bed in winter," says Carol Capobianco, Director of the Native Plant Center at Westchester Community College in Vanhalla, N.Y. Gardens can form mini-nature preserves even after the end of the growing season and allow many animal species to feed and/or overwinter. On the negative side, a local master says that debris can also be a haven for insects and diseases that could plague your gardening efforts next year. He recommends cleaning up the vegetable garden and putting up a couple of bird feeders instead. Another option is to naturalize an area of the yard that is away from the garden.

Here are some tips for encouraging messy gardens: \* Plant a wide variety of things, \* Leave your leaves on the property, \* Allow the gorgeous dried flower heads to stay standing in your garden, \* Let the grass grow tall and seed, \* Build a brush pile with fallen branches instead of removing them, \* Forget the chemicals, \* Leave snags (dead or dying trees and tree stumps) on your property, \* Delay garden clean-up until spring, after several 50°F (10°C) days, which

allows overwintering pollinators "to wake up" for spring and move on. For more info, do a Google search for "Pledge to be a lazy gardener."



## **Don't Launch Balloons**

Helium-filled balloons made of latex look pretty and harmless when they float through the sky. However, what goes up must come down. Eventually, they end up as litter on a string in fields, woods, and lakes where they pose a deadly threat. Numerous animal species have been found with such balloons as well as other plastic debris in their stomachs, blocking their digestive tracts. In too many cases, it led to starvation and death. The Ocean Conservancy says it picked up remnants of 94,000 balloons in the course of a year. The problem is so serious that multiple cities, states, and countries have issued "balloon laws" that restrict or outlaw mass-balloon releases. – Celebratory alternatives exist, including music performances, banners, soap bubbles, paper confetti, eatables, reusable inflatable characters, water features, or laser shows.

## **"Ban the Box" Gives Ex-Felons a Fighting Chance**

California recently became the 10<sup>th</sup> state to introduce "Ban the Box" legislation that guarantees fair-chance employment to people with criminal records. Many big cities also have strict ordinances for both the public sector and private businesses in place. Numerous other states and cities are considering such a ban. The movement's centerpiece is a prohibition to ask job applicants on applications whether they have a criminal record. If they do, it often results in an automatic "application denied" situation. The idea of the growing "Banning the Box" movement is to give ex-convicts a fair chance to land a job interview after they had a chance to prove their qualifications. Their criminal record can be discussed after the interview and a job offer is made, however, which can still result in rejections. In some instances, employers are asked to explain why someone's criminal history is relevant to the position. America is a nation where 1 in 3 working-age adults has had a scrape with the law, often leading to a life-long stigma even in minor cases and long after ex-convicts have paid their debt to society. Members of minority groups, already suffering from job discrimination, are particularly affected. Some estimates show that when people with a criminal record cannot find work, it affects the GDP by \$78 to \$87 billion per year. "Ban the Box" legislation makes sense, although in and by itself it will not eliminate all the hurdles that individuals face.

## **A Crop of New Farmers**

According to the USDA, the number of farmers under the age of 35 has grown by 2.2% between 2007 and 2012. Many people with college degrees are going back to the land and practicing organic farming. They limit or eliminate fertilizers & pesticides, diversity their crops or animals, and are deeply involved in their local food systems via CSA programs and farmers' markets. Finances can be tight for idealistic young people, but there are ways to do it. For example, "food hubs" allow for the collective storage, processing, and marketing of food. The costs of farmland and equipment can be cost-prohibitive, and student loans disqualify some young farmers from receiving credit. New policy initiatives such as student-loan forgiveness, farm-transition, and land-conservation programs would help in this regard.

## **What Makes Communities Happy?**

National Geographic and best-selling author Dan Buettner ("The Blue Zones of Happiness") have partnered in search of the happiest cities in the U.S. Designed by Gallup, their study established 15 metrics – from eating healthy and learning something new every day to civic engagement, financial security, vacation time, and health checkups – that signal happiness. Buettner notes that there is a high correlation between walkability & bikeability and happiness in a city. With more than 300 miles of dedicated bike trails and plenty of other opportunities to get outdoors, Colorado's

Boulder garnered the #1 spot. "Cities like Boulder question the unquestioned virtues of development," says Buettner; "this benefits visitors, who can experience an emphasis on greenery, a high-quality culinary community, limited marketing onslaught and no billboards." Buettner was also surprised to see a strong correlation between happiness and the water quality of lakes, rivers, and beaches. An important take-away message is that happiness doesn't just happen by itself. "There's a genesis to it. Enlightened leaders make conscious decisions to favor quality of life over economic development or political expediency," Buettner notes. – The full report is available in the November issue of "National Geographic."

## WORLD



### Trump Administration Allows Import of Elephant Trophies

Although the African elephant population has declined dramatically and is protected under the Endangered Species Act, the Trump Administration has announced that it has removed barriers to importing elephant trophies from the African states of Zambia and Zimbabwe. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service offered this beautiful "logic" as a rationale: "the killing of African elephant trophy animals ... will enhance the survival of the African elephant." The idea behind the plan is that revenue derived from trophy hunting can be put toward conservation efforts that help bolster the endangered populations. That thinking is wrong in this instance. 1. Trophy hunting brings in minuscule amounts of revenue of total tourism and of a country's gross national product. Only a handful of rich people can afford it. 2. In many African countries, corruption is ubiquitous; little or nothing trickles down to local communities because authorities keep nearly all of it, often stashing it away in foreign havens. 3. Zimbabwe just went through a military coup of sorts. The country's future is in jeopardy, and it has other priorities than proper wildlife management. Wayne Pacelle from the Humane Society of the U.S. is right when he says that authorizing the import of trophies is "a new form of colonialism." Many pictures show rich white men in front of large African game animals slaughtered by them, including two of Donald Trump's sons. The measure is a gift to the big-game trade (e.g., the Safari Club International) from Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. As the "New York Times" put it sarcastically, "he is apparently not satisfied with scrapping environmental and species protections on just one continent." Zinke's action has nothing to do with protecting endangered and threatened wildlife.

**Update 11/18:** In light of a furious backlash by environmentalists and animal lovers, President Trump has tweeted that he is putting the deregulation measure temporarily on hold, pending further review. In a tweet, he called the display of dead elephants and elephant parts "a horror show." It turns out, however, that a similar ban on the import of lions, lion heads, and lion hides was also removed by Zinke.

### Prince Harry and Meghan Markle

In the grand scheme of things, the engagement of Prince Harry of Wales and Meghan Markle is an irrelevant factoid. Only celebrity-obsessed people care about such things. However, it is interesting to note that Meghan Markle, 36, is 1. an American actress, 2. a "commoner," 3. biracial (her mother is black), and 4. divorced. Only a few decades ago, she would have been completely unacceptable to the royal family in Great Britain. For example, in 1936 Edward VIII was forbidden by the Church of England to marry his divorced American girlfriend, so he renounced the throne, causing a constitutional crisis. Although racial prejudice and aristocratic snobbery are still very much in evidence, the wedding announcement is celebrated as an example of openness, inclusivity, and diversity. Together, the future Duke and Duchess of Sussex are taking the British monarchy into the modern era.

### FIFA Is a Toxic Brand

FIFA, the global governing body for soccer, is easily the most corrupt organization in the world. Bribery and vote-rigging has been going on for years, with FIFA board members routinely selling their votes to the highest bidder. Its reputation is now so low that the association has trouble finding companies willing to partner with it. While the field of 32 nations for the 2018 world-cup tournament in Russia is set, only 1 of 20 slots available to sponsors has been claimed. Being involved with FIFA is no longer considered a safe investment for companies – unless you are China or Russia.

### Christo and Nature

Bulgarian-born artist Christo, now 82, is known for wrapping entire buildings, such as the German Reichstag in 1995. However, some of his projects have been more controversial than others. He has also been eager to drape entire rivers, coastlines, islands, and mountains. A number of years ago, he wanted to lower a silvery fabric attached to steel cables along 42 miles of the rugged Arkansas River in Colorado for an estimated cost of \$50 million. The project would have required drilling 9,000 holes 50 feet deep to anchor the fabric. We take exception to installing such large-scale projects in the wilderness where they disturb wild animals and disrupt their habitat. There are enough man-made structures that Christo can wrap, to hide the hideousness of what they represent. But to cover up and hide nature is a hubristic crime against the environment, doing more harm than good. Wise people learned a long time ago that not all that is possible should be done. – There is currently a retrospective of Christo's monumental works at the ING Art Center in Brussels, which runs through Feb. 25. It includes more than a dozen works that were never realized. Let's hope the Arkansas River project is one of them. Christo recently indicated in an interview that he was tired of waiting and that he is inclined to abandon the plan.

### Do Rivers Have Rights?

In several countries around the world, natural features such as rivers, lakes, forests, mountains as well as animal and plant species are recognized as legal persons entitled to protections. In Ecuador, the constitution now declares that nature "has the right to exist, persist, maintain, and regenerate its vital cycles." In a first-of-its-kind lawsuit, the same question is now asked in the U.S. Denver lawyer Jason Flores-Williams and the environmental group Deep Green Resistance (DGR) have filed a lawsuit on behalf of their plaintiff, the Colorado River ecosystem. It seeks to hold the State of Colorado and Gov. John Hickenlooper liable for violating the river's "right to exist, flourish, regenerate, be restored, and naturally evolve." If a corporation has rights, Flores-Williams argues, then an ancient waterway that predates humans should too. Not surprisingly, so-called conservatives – uninterested in conserving nature at all – immediately called the lawsuit ridiculous. However, the idea is neither new nor odd. In the U.S., it dates to at least 1972 when lawyer Christopher Stone wrote an article entitled "Should Trees Have Standing?" Spinoza's philosophy of pantheism also provides a justification for a less anthropocentric view: if God is everywhere – in every person, animal, and plant, in every mountain, forest, and river – then it follows that the natural world is deserving of full protection and must not be harmed.

### "The Water Will Come"

"The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities, and the Remaking of the Civilized World," a new book by Jeff Goodell (Little & Brown, 2017), is making waves. Nobody knows for sure how much the sea level will rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current estimates vary from 3 feet to 6 feet and beyond. But the water is rising, and it is rising faster than was predicted in the past. Many cities in low-lying coastal areas will certainly see a lot of flooding and at one point be entirely under water. In America, Florida's Miami is perhaps the most vulnerable community. Goodell also visited many European, Asian, and African cities that are in peril. The International Organization for Migration estimates that there will be 200 million climate refugees by 2050, putting a lot of stress on global systems. The specter of sea-level rise poses thorny questions in the U.S. For example, a barrier to protect New York's Wall Street would deflect water into poorer neighborhoods. Will the rich be protected at the expense of the poor?