

Community Matters

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

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

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Asbury Noontime Organ Recital (2/1)

Asbury's First Thursday Noontime Recital Series continues on Feb. 1 (12:15-12:45 pm) with a concert by Joshua Brodbeck, Minister of Music at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Upper Arlington and Director of the Delaware Community Chorus. On the program are works by George Shearing, Marcel Lannquait, and J. S. Bach. Asbury UMC is located at 55 W. Lincoln Ave. Free & open to the public.

OWU Science Lecture on Birds (2/1)

Dr. Jordan Price from St. Mary's College of Maryland will give a presentation entitled "Female Songbirds Aren't so Dull after All: Reconstructing the Evolution of Sexual Dimorphism" on Thurs., Feb. 1 (4:10 pm) in OWU's Science Center (SCSC 163). Male songbirds have colorful plumage and sing such elaborate songs, while females appear to be relatively dull & quiet. This sexual difference was fundamental to Darwin's theory of sexual selection & evolution. New findings, however, are causing scientists to rethink some of Darwin's assumptions regarding differences between the sexes. Free & open to the public.

Delaware Police Dept. Holds Community Discussion (2/1)

The Delaware Police Department (DPD) has organized a presentation about how and when local police officers use force when confronted with resistance. Topics will include policy, training, levels of response, and an opportunity for discussion. The event will be held on Thurs., Feb. 1 (7 pm) in the Benes Rooms of OWU's HWCC Campus Center. Free & open to the public. This is the first of a Delaware Police Dept. Community Discussion Series and it supported by the Delaware Community Coalition (DCC).

Candidate John Russell at OWU (2/1)

John Russell, Democratic candidate for the 12th Congressional District, will speak on Thurs., Feb. 1 (7-9 pm) in the

Bayley Room of Beeghly Library (43 Rowland Ave.) on the OWU campus. The event is sponsored by the College Democrats. For more info on Russell, see the entry under "Delaware County" or visit his website and/or Facebook page.

Great Decisions: Russia (2/2)

OWU prof. Sean Kay will speak on "Russia's Foreign Policy" Fri., Feb. 2 (12-1 pm) at William Street UMC (28 W. William St.). Free & open to the public.

First Friday (2/2)

On this new February First Friday, you'll have the chance to experience a date night in downtown Delaware. Businesses will be offering 2-for-1 specials for you to celebrate with your "plus one." – Please note that Chocolate Walk has been moved to a new date, Feb. 10, and is now a stand-alone event.

Super Bowl LII (2/4)

The 52nd Super Bowl will be held Feb. 4 at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Ohio Trombone Quartet (2/6)

The Ohio Trombone Quartet, formed in 2016, will give a guest recital on Tues., Feb. 6 (8 pm) in Jemison Auditorium inside Sanborn Hall at 23 Elizabeth St. Free & open to the public.

"Indivisible" Meets (2/7)

Indivisible (Ohio District 12) meets Wed., Feb. 7 (7-9 pm) at Liberty Community Center (207 London Rd.). Park at & use the south side entrance. The goal of the meeting is to introduce (or reintroduce) volunteers into the basics how political campaigns operate.

Historical Society Lecture (2/7)

The Delaware County Historical Society presents "Homes on the Underground Railroad, 1800-1863" on Wed., Feb. 7 (7 pm) at The Barn at Stratford, 2690 Stratford Rd. Free & open to the public. For more info, visit www.delawareohiohistory.org.

Northwest Neighborhood Association Meets (2/7)

The NNA's next meeting is Thurs., Feb. 7 (7:30 pm) at the Andrews House (39 W. Winter St.). Check out their newsletter for a list of planned events for 2018. The website is www.delawareanna.org.

Josephinum Lecture (2/7)

Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis Bernard Hebda will give the Annual Pio Cardinal Laghi Chair Lecture at the Pontifical College Josephinum (9625 N. High St., just north of I-270) in Worthington on Wed., Feb. 7. The event will be held at the Jessing Center and starts at 7 pm. The presentation, which is free & open to the public, is entitled "Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Pope Francis' Call for a More Synodal Church."

Olympic Winter Games (2/9-2/25)

The 2018 Winter Olympics are scheduled to take place in South Korea from Feb. 9-25. 92 nations are expected to compete in 102 medal events, incl. athletes from N. Korea and Russia. Television coverage will be extensive.

Great Decisions: Media & Foreign Policy (2/9)

OWU prof. Paul Kostyu will discuss "Media & Foreign Policy" Fri., Feb. 9 (12-1 pm) at William Street UMC (28 W. William St.). Free & open to the public.

Chocolate Walk Moved to Feb. 10 – \$

Main Street Delaware has moved the annual Chocolate Walk to Sat., Feb. 10 (12-6 pm). The new day and time gives ticket holders more time to collect and enjoy treats, as well as shop, browse, and dine in Delaware's historic downtown in broad daylight. Chocolate Walk tickets are \$20 each and available online at www.mainstreetdelaware.com. Tour begins at 20 E. Winter St. where participants will receive a map for the self-guided tour. Only 250 tickets will be sold for the Chocolate Walk.



Gypsy Moth Open House (2/12)

The Ohio Dept. of Agriculture (ODA) plans to once again spray against the Gypsy moth this summer. Aerial treatments will occur between June 15 and 30. ODA says its products used are not harmful to humans and wildlife, but Gypsy moth spraying remains controversial. A public open house is scheduled for Mon., Feb. 12 (6-8 pm) at the Delaware YMCA, 1121 S. Houk Rd. For more info, fact sheets, maps of this year's treatment areas (which include the Delaware Run corridor), etc., visit www.agri.ohio.gov and click on "Programs."

OWU Lecture on the Armenian Genocide (2/12)

Historian Ronald Grigor Suny from the Univ. of Michigan will speak on the Armenian genocide during WW I on Mon., Feb. 12 (7 pm) in Corns #312 at 78 S. Sandusky St. Suny is the author of a book on the history of the Armenian genocide, released in paperback in May. His talk represents the 2018 Robert Kragalott Lecture on Genocide, Mass Atrocity, and Human Rights. Free & open to the public.

Jessica L. Byrd Presentation (2/13)

Jessica L. Byrd will present the 2018 Butler A. Jones Lecture Series on Race and Society on Tues., Feb. 13 (7 pm) in Benes A + B in the HWCC Campus Center. She will discuss her role as a self-described black queer feminist operating at the intersection of social justice and electoral politics. She is the founder of Three Point Strategies, a Washington-based consulting firm. In 2016, she was named by both Essence Magazine and Rolling Stone as a "Woman to Watch."

Valentine's Day (2/14)

The story behind Valentine's Day is murky. The Catholic Church recognizes several Valentines as martyrs and saints. According to one plausible legend, however, in the 3rd century A.D. / C.E. Roman Emperor Claudius II. prohibited young men from getting married because he needed them as soldiers. Valentine, a Christian priest, defied him and continued to marry couples. He was executed for his transgression. In the 5th century, Pope Gelasius declared February 14 Valentine's Day. Today, we associate the day with love.

"The Diary of Anne Frank" in February

Otterbein University will perform "The Diary of Anne Frank," a play by Frances Goodrich & Albert Hackett" in a new adaption by Wendy Kesselman on Feb. 15-18 & 22-24. The director is Mark Mineart, the venue the Fritsche Theatre at Cowan Hall (30 S. Grove St.) in Westerville. For more info, visit www.otterbein.edu.

Great Decisions: South Africa (2/16)

OWU student Raissa Kanku will speak on "South Africa's Fragile Democracy" Fri., Feb. 16 (12-1 pm) at William Street UMC (28 W. William St.). Free & open to the public.

"Living in the Story" (2/16)

Filmmaker Lynn Estomin will introduce and screen her new documentary "Living in the Story" on Fri., Feb. 16 (7 pm) in Corns 312 on the OWU campus. The 52-minute film documents 35 years of art making by Japanese-American photographer Patrick R. Nagatani. Free & open to the public.

OWU Bishop Backer (2/17)

The 2018 Annual Ohio Wesleyan University Bishop Backer Community Day will be Sat., Feb. 17. The public is invited for a day of basketball, community expo, zoo animals (2:15-3:15 pm), games, prizes, networking & family fun. The Community Expo will be held from 12-3:30 pm in Edwards Field House (south side). A woman's basketball game is scheduled for 1 pm, a men's basketball game at 3 pm (both against Allegheny College). Admission & parking are free with a donation of a non-perishable food item.

Piano / Violin Duo at OWU (2/18)

OWU's Frank Chiou, piano, and guest violinist Dawn Dongeun Wohn from Ohio University will give a recital in Jemison Auditorium inside Sanborn Hall (23 Elizabeth St.) on Sun., Feb. 18 (3:15 pm). The duo will perform works by Mozart, Bach, and Kaprálková. Free & open to the public.

OWU Lecture on Conservation in Jamaica (2/20)

OWU alumnus Dr. Kemi Fuentes-George '01, who currently teaches at Middlebury College, will speak on "Post-Slavery Narratives and Conservation in Rural Jamaica: How Local Culture Affects Global Environmental Governance" on Tues., Feb. 20 (7 pm) in Benes B of OWU's HWCC Campus Center. Fuentes-George is the author of "Between Preservation and Exploitation: Transnational Networks and Conservation in Developing Countries." Free & open to the public.

Maple Sugar Days at Stratford (2/17 + 24)

Stratford Ecological Center at 3083 Liberty Rd. is having its 2018 Maple Sugar Days on Sat., Feb. 17 + 24. The 2018 Maple Sugar Pancake Breakfast is scheduled for Sat., March 3. Registration is required for Maple Sugar events.



Jeffrey Ford Reads from New Novel (2/22)

Jeffrey Ford, OWU part-time instructor and award-winning author of 9 books and 5 short-story collections, will read from his 2017 novel "The Twilight Pariah" on Thurs., Feb. 22 (4:10 pm) in the Bayley Room of Beeghly Library on the OWU campus. Three friends go looking for treasure in an old house, but instead discover horror. Visit www.wellbuiltcity.com to learn more about him. Free & open to the public.

Great Decisions: The U.S. Military (2/23)

Retired Major General Dennis Laich will discuss "U.S. Global Engagement & the Military" Fri., Feb. 23 (12-1 pm) at William Street UMC (28 W. William St.). Free & open to the public.

OWU Student Film Festival (2/23)

The 14th Annual OWU Documentary Film Festival, featuring short films created by OWU students, will be held Fri., Feb. 23 (7 pm) in Benes B of OWU's HWCC Campus Center. Works may contain mature language and subject matter. Free & open to the public.

Arena Fair Theatre Performs "12 Angry Men" (12/23-25)

"Twelve Angry Men" is an intriguing courtroom drama written by Reginald Rose. Initially a 1954 teleplay, it was adapted for the stage and also made into a successful film. The local Arena Fair Theatre will perform the play on Fri., 2/23 (7 pm), Sat., 2/24 (2 + 7 pm), and Sun., 2/25 (2 pm) at the historic 1868 Delaware County Court House. Greg Patterson is directing the all-male cast. On the surface, the play deals with the question of the guilt or innocence of a teenager accused of stabbing his father to death. However, on a deeper level it is a meta-inquiry into the American court system itself and the questionable ways juries may arrive at their decisions. Tickets are \$10 for general courtroom seating & \$15 for special "Jury Box" seating. Visit www.arenafair.com or call 740-302-TKTS.

OWU Lecture on Transatlantic Relationship (2/27)

Julianne Smith from the Center for a New American Security will discuss "The Future of the Transatlantic Relationship" on Tues., Feb. 27 (7 pm) in the Benes Rooms of OWU's HWCC Campus Center. Her talk represents the 29th Annual John Kennard Eddy Memorial Lecture on World Politics. Free & open to the public.

Piano Recital by Mariko Kaneda (2/27)

Pianist and OWU instructor Mariko Kaneda will give a piano recital on Tues., Feb. 27 (8 pm) in the Jemison Auditorium inside Sanborn Hall at 23 Elizabeth St. She will be joined by two violinists – David Niwa (Assistant Concertmaster of Columbus Symphony) and Paul Roby (Associate Principal Second Violin of Philadelphia Orchestra). On the program are works by Robert Schumann and German-Polish composers Franz Doppler and Moritz Moszkowski.

Upcoming Columbus Events

The 2018 Home & Garden Show will be held at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus Feb. 17-25. – The Arnold Sportsworld Kids & Teens Expo will take place March 3-4, also at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus. – The annual Arts Festival is June 8-10, 2018.

DELAWARE

The City of Delaware in February

City Council meets Mon., Feb. 12 & 26. A council retreat is scheduled for Sat., Feb. 10. (The time and location have yet to be announced. This is a public meeting, but it might not be streamed live.) Additional meetings include: Public Works / Utilities Committee (Tues., Feb. 6), Civil Service Commission (Wed., Feb. 7, 3 pm), Planning Commission (Wed., Feb. 7), Board of Zoning Appeals (Wed., Feb. 14), Parking & Safety Committee (Mon., Feb. 19), Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (Tues., Feb. 20), Shade Tree Commission (Tues., Feb. 27), and Historic Preservation Commission (Wed., Feb. 28). All meetings take place in City Hall (101 S. Sandusky St.) at 7 pm unless otherwise noted. Please be advised that commission and committee meetings are cancelled quite frequently due to a lack of agenda or quorum. We recommend that you check the City's website (www.delawareohio.net) before traveling to a meeting.

City Hall Streamlines Access

Effective Feb. 1, the north & west doors to City Hall at 101 S. Sandusky St. will be closed to the general public. Residents doing business in City Hall are asked to enter the building through the south door, which most members of the public do already when they attend meetings and pay their water bill or taxes. The south door will be open Mon. – Fri., 8am – 5 pm, and for all scheduled evening meetings.

Blake Jordan New Public Utilities Director

After 32 years with the City of Delaware, Brad Stanton retired from his position as Director of Public Utilities at the end of January. The new director, Blake Jordan, started on 1/22. To ease the transition, he worked together with Stanton for a week or so. Jordan, 34, is born and raised in Delaware. He graduated from Hayes High School and has a degree in Civil Engineering from Ohio Northern Univ. in Ada. He worked as a staff engineer for Delaware County before becoming a construction manager for the multinational engineering company AECOM where he oversaw \$125 in upgrades to Columbus' water plants.

Delaware's Watershed / Sustainability Coordinator

Caroline Cicerchi, Delaware's new Watershed / Sustainability Coordinator, is looking forward to a busy year. The tentative date for the 2018 Northern Olentangy Watershed (NOW) Festival is Sat., June 16. Clean-up activities are planned for Sun., April 15 (Blue Limestone Park) in conjunction with OWU's Green Week and Sat., Aug. 25 (Olentangy River between William St. and Central Ave.). Possible activities for Earth Day (Sun., April 22) and Arbor Day (Fri., April 27) are also being considered. At least one event is being planned to remove invasive species such as honeysuckle. In addition, Cicerchi will look at ways to make events involving City employees more environmentally friendly through increased recycling options. This initiative is in line with MORPC's "Sustainable 2050" goals, of which Cicerchi is the local representative. She will attempt to align the City's practices with these sustainability goals going forward. In addition, she recently attended a workshop on solar-panel technology and is starting to explore the feasibility of more solar-panel arrays in Delaware. The Watershed / Sustainability Coordinator closely works with various community partners, including Keep Delaware County Beautiful and the Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

Does Delaware Need Vestibules?

At its January 2018 meeting, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) discussed vestibules in Downtown Delaware at great length. A vestibule is an entryway, foyer, or antechamber between the outer door of a structure and the interior. Churches, banks, and schools often have them to better keep out the cold or the heat, dirt or noise. They can also be used by people to take off or put on their coats. The discussion ensued because the owners of The Flying Pig Ale House at 12 S. Sandusky St. requested permission to install a temporary and removable sidewalk vestibule that would be in place during winter months only. According to the submitted plans, the proposed vestibule would extend 2 feet out into the sidewalk.

From an establishment's point of view, vestibules make perfect sense. Without them, icy wind drafts may penetrate the restaurant, making things uncomfortable for customers. The Flying Pig Ale House estimates that it loses "hundreds of dollars" every month because of this disamenity. Vestibules also help reduce heating costs. They may well be the most efficient solution to keep cold air out, according to co-owner Amanda Sykes.

From the commission's point of view, however, vestibules that extend into the sidewalk and public right of way are problematic. Commission members fear that once the idea catches on there would be a proliferation of vestibules up and down Sandusky St., changing the historic character of Downtown Delaware. To understand the commission's hesitation, take a look at the vestibule of the 12 West restaurant, which is black and protrudes far into the sidewalk. At the moment, there are no guidelines in place what vestibules should look like and when and where they might be used. Without clear parameters, commission members felt that permitting exterior vestibules would be tantamount to opening Pandora's box. Should they be permitted in historic Downtown Delaware at all? Might they be acceptable in transitional districts surrounding it, however? In the end, the commission tabled the request to allow City staff and commission members to study the issue some more and to explore what other communities have done. Columbus, for instance, allows vestibules only on private property, never on sidewalks or other public right-of-way areas.

2018 Citizens Academy (2/8-6/11)

The 2018 Delaware Citizens Academy allows up to 20 participants to go behind the scenes of the various city departments. The 10 free classes begin Thurs., Feb. 8, and end Mon., June 11. Most sessions are on Thursdays between 6 and 8 pm. To inspect the rules and to register, please visit Delaware's website (www.delawareohio.net).

The Delaware Police Department

According to a story in the Delaware Gazette (Jan. 26), Police Chief Bruce Pijanowski said that the number of "reports" fell from 2,850 in 2016 to 2,614 in 2017, which is a decrease of 9%. The Gazette concluded that "crime" has decreased by that amount in Delaware. However, it should be noted that this conclusion may or may not be accurate. A "report" is not the same thing as a "crime." Many of the reports involve vehicles crashes, for instance, which are not crimes. And how many "reports" were related to medical emergencies or lost animals? According to Pijanowski, thefts and drug-related crimes have indeed decreased overall in Delaware, but he provided few statistical numbers to prove his point. "Domestic situations" have actually increased from 183 to 191 during that time period, a rise of about 4%. And Delaware just had its first murder case since 2011. – The DPD strives continually to improve its philosophy, tactics, and strategy. We applaud Pijanowski's efforts to engage the community as a whole by having more officers on foot, by having neighborhood events, by reaching out to minority populations (Delaware Community Coalition & One People), and by organizing educational programs (Police Academy & basketball). The DPD could and should be a great community resource, one that residents trust, embrace & support but – as Pijanowski noted – there is still "a lot of work to do" to get Delaware to that point.

Great Decisions 2018

The 2018 "Great Decisions" speaker series was announced last month. The 8-part series runs from Feb. 2 through March 23 and is held every Friday from 12-1 pm at William Street United Methodist

Church at 28 W. William St. Topics will include Russia (2/2), media & foreign policy (2/9), South Africa (2/16), the military (2/23), global health (3/2), the waning of pax Americana (3/9), Turkey (3/16), and China (3/23). For details, visit the community-events calendar of this newsletter. Free & open to the public. Coffee & tea are provided.

Luke Miller – Bicycling around the World

In 2016, Delaware County resident Luke Miller set out on a bicycling around the world. So far, he has covered about 15,000 miles in Central and East Asia. During a month-long break from his tour, he visited his family and spoke to Delaware residents on Jan. 9 before heading back to Nepal later this week. His talk, which included several hundred pictures, was sponsored by the Sister City Advisory Board of the City of Delaware and Delaware City Schools, both of them strong supporters of cultural exchanges. Everywhere Luke went, he encountered kind and friendly people. Even when farmers and nomads possessed little, they generously shared food and a drink, shelter and a ride. Hospitality is baked into Asian cultures, from Thailand in the south to Mongolia in the north, and from Turkmenistan in the west to China in the east. Visitors and guests are always welcome. Opening the door for travelers is an ancient custom and sacred duty that everyone practices. Guests are considered a blessing, a gift from God, and are treated with care and respect. (Of course, guests must also behave appropriately by showing gratitude and by not making unreasonable demands on their hosts.) The take-away message from Luke Miller's presentation was that people are more or less the same everywhere in the world. We may have different skin colors and pray to different gods, yet we are all part of the same human family. What unites us is greater than what divides us. Most religions, incl. the Christian Bible, admonish us: "You shall love the stranger" and extend hospitality to them. – You can follow Luke Miller's adventures on his blog, which can be found – along with more than a thousand images – at www.spokesandcoldoats.wordpress.com.

Delaware Needs an Arts Council

Many art organizations live hand to mouth. The Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC) has now proposed a small user fee on tickets to arts, cultural, entertainment, and professional sporting events to address the situation. (School-related events would be excluded.) Compared to peer cities such as Cleveland or Cincinnati, Columbus ranks well below in terms of public funding for the arts. A recent national study found that the nonprofit arts-and-culture industry in Greater Columbus generates about \$412.3 million in annual economic activity and supports the equivalent of 14,980 full-time jobs.

The City of Delaware uses a bed tax charged to people who stay in hotels and motels, but the amount generated and distributed (under \$100,000) is small. Only a handful of organizations benefit from the Community Promotion Fund. As Delaware is starting to make a name for itself in the arts-and-culture landscape, it too would profit from the existence of 1. an umbrella organization (Delaware Arts Council) and 2. a framework for more secure funding for its galleries and concerts, movies and plays, museums and programs.

Delaware Needs Del-Mor by Tom Wolber

Del-Mor Dwellings, a charitable nonprofit at 30 N. Franklin St., was established in 1990. The organization exists to develop housing sites that offer vulnerable disabled members of the community the opportunity to establish a safe, decent place to call home, which is affordable to them, and designed to meet their special needs. Some properties located in Delaware include 129/131 Cheshire St., 241/243/245 Park Ave., and 800 Ravine Ridge Dr. Del-Mor has also developed and continues to manage supportive housing at locations in Crawford, Marion, and Morrow Counties.

Del-Mor is now proposing a new 48-unit project at 250 Curtis St. on a 3.64-acre site located at the northwest corner of Firestone Dr., across from the former Salvation Army complex. The existing home at the east end of the property will eventually be demolished and replaced as part of phase 2, but that may not happen until years from now. At its Jan. 17 meeting, Delaware's Planning Commission discussed the project at length as well as at a Jan. 29 work session.

Del-Mor's executive director, Jim Wilson, addressed the great and currently unmet need for safe, supportive, and affordable

housing to its clients whose lives are challenged by significant physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. His nonprofit currently has a Delaware County waiting list of 57 individuals. Del-Mor's attorney, Michael Shade, made a similar statement: "We as a community have to understand these needs are out there." Ben Powers, executive director of Family Promise, also noted that there is generally "a lack of affordable housing in the community" and that the project would "meet a great need." In addition, several other people, including members of the clergy such as Rev. Gunnar Cerda, spoke in favor of the facility. One elderly lady, whose impaired son is on Del-Mor's waiting list, wondered what would happen to her adult son after she dies without a designated facility.

Many nearby residents, however, are balking at the project. Members of the Curtis Farms homeowner(s) association (HOA) and people living on Curtis St. mentioned several points: 1. There was insufficient time and notification; 2. The proposed density (48 units on 3.64 acres) may be too high; 3. The HOA does not want "an apartment of any kind there"; 4. The area lacks nearby stores for those unable to drive; 5. Home values may decrease or even be destroyed; 6. Traffic on Firestone and parking on the street might become a problem; 7. Residents also cited the site's supposed proximity to Schultz Elementary School ("four, five blocks"); and 7. Neighbors raised the specter of drugs, crime, and violence.

A healthy and robust debate about the pluses and minuses of the proposed project is certainly welcome. The more the community knows and the more time it has to study the issue, the better. Rushing the project through would indeed be a mistake. However, with all due respect to the residents in Curtis Farms, many of the raised points are specious. The proposed site at 250 Curtis St. is quite a distance from Schultz Elementary School. And although it sits just south of Hidden Ridge Apartments, it is not anywhere near single-family units. The development would be well buffered to the west and north by trees and to the south by a retention pond. The southeast end of the property is close to Habitat's Restore place and various industrial sites. It is not the prettiest part of town. The proposed density is much lower than the density in the adjacent Hidden Ridge apartment complex. Perhaps there is some negotiating room in the formula (e.g., a total of 36 units?), but a cost-benefit analysis may render this suggestion null and void. Besides, density is not necessarily a big or bad thing when dealing with single people who do not cook and do not own a million items. The structures themselves are modest and residential in size and appearance and reminiscent of a daycare, small school, nursing home, or medical office. As far as traffic and transportation is concerned, only 39% of Del-Mor's clients own and drive a car, but the nonprofit has indicated on its proposal that it will work with the Delaware Area Transit Agency (DATA) to establish reliable transportation. No significant increase in traffic is expected, and a traffic-impact study is therefore not warranted, according to city engineers. During the conversation, it was pointed out that the occupants of the facility are quiet people who just want to have a place of their own – a refuge or sanctuary where they can live in peace and quiet.

Even when they did not explicitly state it, the greatest concern of Curtis Farm residents seems to be fear of the unknown and concern for the safety of their families. Their primal emotions are perfectly understandable. Human beings are hard-wired for survival. Residents are worried that mentally ill, unpredictable individuals with schizophrenia or other mental conditions may pose a danger to people or property. However, let's look at the facts. Del-Mor has been in operation for the past 27 years, and there has never been a single negative headline in the papers. The Delaware City Police "Incident Report" for all Del-Mor properties in Delaware from 2016 and 2017 indicates that 95% of calls received were about medical issues such as "Chest pain" or "Difficulty Breathing," or "Lift Assist." We know from national statistics that people with mental issues are far more likely to be victims themselves than committing crimes. The Delaware Police Department is of the general opinion that people with mental challenges are far better off in a stable and caring environment where they are evaluated, supervised, and medicated by trained and trusted support staff 24/7. It helps them and is better for public safety. Healthcare experts also note that a mental illness is not that different from a physical illness such as diabetes or heart condition. With proper medication, it can be kept in check. Treatment works. Why then do we

perceive people with a mental handicap differently from people with physical ailments?

Delaware has a tremendous unmet need for affordable rentals for people with disabilities. Nearby residents will be minimally affected by the development, which is located at a significant distance from single-family homes. In fact, in many respects the proposed site is ideally situated and perfectly compatible with the neighborhood. It would be unfortunate indeed if unfounded fear and prejudice would prevent the project from going forward. In five or ten years, people will wonder what the fuss was all about because the new Del-Mor facility and its occupants will have blended in and become indistinguishable from the surrounding buildings and their residents, just like all the other buildings owned and operated by Del-Mor.

The proposed project is a crucial inflection point for Delaware. Whether the city approves or rejects the development is a measure of the community. This is a test of our hearts and souls and character. Will it pass or fail it? Will we welcome and embrace our brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, friends and neighbors who happen to be different from us? Or will we stigmatize and marginalize, reject and discard them? Communities flourish when people watch out for each other and take care of each other, and they will fail when we become hardened and callous. "America is a compassionate nation," President Trump asserted in his State of the Union address on January 30. Let's prove him right.



OWU's Austin Manor

OWU is thinking about the future of Austin Manor (95 Elizabeth St.), a housing complex at the corner of W. Central Ave. and Elizabeth St., across from the Arts Castle. The building has accumulated much deferred maintenance. The roof alone, which is leaking, would cost \$2 million to replace. Because of the water problem, the 4th floor is currently unoccupied, and the structure is losing money. OWU administrators are of the opinion that a complete renovation would be "cost-prohibitive." They are currently looking at all options, incl. selling the building. Multi-million-dollar campaigns were built around other historic OWU structures (e.g., University Hall, Merrick Hall, and Stuyvesant Hall) in the past, but it seems a strategic decision has been made to exclude Austin Manor from the same consideration. Austin Manor, which was built in 1923 and has 61 to 62 apartments, until recently had the reputation for being the nation's only intergenerational university housing complex. Historically, 20% of the units were rented to current or retired faculty and staff, and 10% to students. The place was featured in a 2012 New York Times article. Unfortunately, however, it appears that new administrators are not fully cognizant of the rich tradition and legacy, significance and symbolism of the building, which is on the historical register. Also, OWU has entered a new retrenchment phase, and 2 other university-owned buildings have already been shed (104 Oak Hill Dr. and 235 W. William St.).

OWU Book Club: "Conversations about Race"

The OWU Book Club has chosen Beverly Daniel Tatum's national bestseller "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria and Other Conversations about Race" for the spring 2018 semester. The revised and expanded 2017 anniversary edition (464 pp.) will serve as the basis for the discussions. The book club meets twice a month in the Faculty-Staff Dining Room inside HWCC Campus Center, starting Feb. 5 and ending April 30. Meeting times are Mondays, 12-1 pm. Interested community guests are welcome. For more info, contact Assistant Chaplain Lisa Ho at lho@owu.edu.

Filmmaker Holly Hey at OWU

Toledo filmmaker Holly Hey came to the OWU campus on Jan. 23 to present the 25-minute version of her new documentary on the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Her film, "Crossing Water," does not provide an objective bird's-eye view of the origin, history, and scope of the problem, and no attempt was made to talk to officials and to

present the other side. Instead, Hey's approach is personal, subjective, and intimate. The core of her film are conversations with people delivering water bottles, and those receiving them, because drinking lead-contaminated municipal water was too hazardous to consume. A portrait of systemic neglect and poverty emerges. When systems fail (and they all do), we have a duty to help each other and provide resources, says Hey, because the authorities are often not able or willing to do so. Flint was a case in point: government effectively abandoned the residents and lied about the problem. In addition, race almost certainly played a role in Flint as well, according to Hey. African-Americans are almost half of the population in Flint, and like in Puerto Rico their needs are not taken as seriously as the needs of white folks. Making people whole again is not a priority for conservative lawmakers. – Holly Hey has made a number of other documentaries, among them "Rat Stories" and "dum dum capital of the world." To learn more about "Crossing Water" and the organization behind it, visit www.crossingwater.org.

International Queer Film Festival

Organized by students at OWU, the Second Annual International Queer Film Festival started Jan. 26 with the French movie "Tomboy." Upcoming films are: XXY (2/2), The Blue Hour (2/9), Eyes Wide Open (2/16), Born This Way (2/21), and Cloudburst (3/2). The movies are shown every Friday at 6 pm in the Benes Rooms of OWU's HWCC Campus Center. A couple of the films feature graphic violence and/or sexuality and may be inappropriate for youngsters. Detailed descriptions can be found on Wikipedia. Free popcorn is served. Free & open to the public.

"Range of Vision" at the Ross Art Museum (1/18 – 3/30)

From Jan. 18 through March 30, seven of OWU's fine arts faculty members will exhibit their latest creations, featuring works in clay, metal, painting & drawing, fabric, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and graphic design, at the Ross Art Museum, 60 S. Sandusky St. Participating faculty are Kristina Bogdanov, David Bugay, Cynthia Cetlin, Frank Hobbs, James Krehbiel, Jeffrey Nilan, and Jonathan Quick. The Ross is open Tues., Wed., and Fri. from 10 am to 5 pm.; Thurs. from 10 am to 9 pm; and Sun. from 1 pm to 5 pm. The museum is handicap-accessible. Admission is always free. Visit www.owu.edu/ross for more info.

"A Fiber Trio" at Gallery 22

"A Fiber Trio" is a new art exhibit at Gallery 22 that started Jan. 5 and will run through Feb. 17. Textiles and other fiber art work by Deb Baillieu (Columbus), Rebecca Dickson (Westerville), and Tammy Perakis Wallace (Delaware) are on display. The show is fascinating and stimulating for at least two reasons: 1. The artists use all kinds of intriguing materials such as buttons & beads, cotton & wool, yarn & floss, gauze & burlap, twigs & leaves. Multiple works by Dickson and others use recycled materials from thrift stores or trash dumpsters, found objects and even construction fencing. Almost anything can be recycled or upcycled and become "art"; there are no limits to one's imagination and creativity. Bring your kids to the exhibit. It might teach them what is possible and that crafting a work of art is something that anyone can try. 2. Many of the works depict objects from the natural world such as animals and trees, e.g., Wallace's triptych consisting of "Wisteria," "Redbud," and "Cherry Blossoms." Quite a few tell rich stories about society and the world. For example, Baillieu's "The Other Side of the River" is the tale of two cities – one prosperous and conspicuous, the other one poor and marginalized. "All Falls Down" by Wallace shows "a once great city," but today only broken ruins remain. "Urban Sprawl" is another social commentary. – Gallery 22 at 22 E. Winter St. is open every Fri. & Sat., 6-8:30 pm. Admission is always free.

"Lori & Friends" Art Exhibit

Fresh Start Café & Bakery at 24 N. Sandusky St. is currently hosting another art exhibit. "Lori & Friends," on display until March 9, features (in alphabetical order) mixed-media artist Bryan Burks, painter Jess Hodge, painter Lori Roof, and fiber artist Derrick Williams. The 20 or so works are for sale. An artist reception took place Jan. 13. Fresh Start Café & Bakery is making the space available for free, as part of their community outreach. The show is sponsored by

Delaware's Creative Foundations, which provides support to individuals with developmental disabilities. Free & open to the public.



Winter Classes at the Arts Castle

Many winter classes at the Delaware County Cultural Arts Center (www.artscastle.org) started in January, but others have a later starting point. The full program is available online and in paper format. Once again, there is a wide spectrum of courses for children, teenagers, and adults in the area of ceramics, dance, drama, drawing, fiber arts, floral arts, French, glass, jewelry, metal, music, painting, photography, theater, wine tasting, yoga, and more. Scholarships are available for students who qualify for financial need or artistic aptitude. The Arts Castle is located at 190 W. Winter St.

4 Stars for Grady Memorial Hospital

The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, which rank hospitals on a regular basis, have awarded 5 stars to three Central Ohio hospitals: Mount Carmel St. Ann's in Westerville, Mount Carmel New Albany Surgical Hospital, and Ohio State University Hospitals. Five hospitals in the area received 4 stars, incl. OhioHealth Grady Memorial Hospital in Delaware. Several additional hospitals were awarded only 3 or 2 stars. No regional hospital received the lowest rating of only 1 star, but Diley Ridge Medical Center in Canal Winchester reported too few measures to be ranked. – The scorecard is based on 57 measures in 7 categories and does include customer satisfaction and public input.



East Side Gas Station Dismantled

The vintage octagonal filling station and service garage at 85 Lake St. (corner of Lake St. and Central Ave.) were given away to two collectors in Kansas (Ben Eckart) and Missouri (Lee Hoover). The structures were dismantled during the last week of January and shipped out of state where they will be reassembled and preserved. According to Eckart, the filling station may have been the last remaining octagon-shaped gas station in the country. Property owner Jeff Shreves (from Shreves Construction) plans to put the .0324-acre property up for sale once the site has been cleaned up. – It is unfortunate that Delaware did not see fit to restore and preserve the unique landmark building within the city. There is this tendency in the pro-growth city to get rid of historic structures, usually by demolishing them. Countless buildings have been lost over the years, including Rutherford B. Hayes' birthplace on E. William St., to make room for "progress." The gas station too came close to heading to the landfill had it not been for out-of-state collectors Eckart and Hoover.

Delaware's First Murder Since 2011

Delaware has not had a murder case since 2011, according to police, but on Thurs., Jan. 25, a person living at 994 Stratford Rd. shot and killed another person outside the apartment complex. Bryan S. Pemberton, 33, was charged with murdering Ali Al Azirjawi, 28, of Hilliard. Bond was set at \$5 million. According to press reports, Azirjawi went with his fiancé to pick up a 7-year-old daughter that his fiancé and Pemberton shared. While the couple was in their vehicle, Pemberton exited the house with a shotgun and struck Azirjawi twice, in the head and in the chest. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene when the police arrived. Pemberton has since undergone a mental-health test, but as no vacancy was available at the Twin Valley Behavioral Healthcare Hospital in Columbus he was transported to Delaware County Jail. According to the Columbus Dispatch, he has a

lengthy history of domestic violence and has served time in jail in the past.

Oak & Brazen Wine Company Now Open

The Oak & Brazen Wine Company at 38 E. Winter St., next to the Strand Theatre, is now open after extensive interior renovations. The establishment offers a wide variety of wine (reds, whites, reserves, and sangrias) as well as craft beers, but it does not have a full kitchen and is not a full-service restaurant. Owners Jeff & Gina Kirby say, "We are a before-dinner or after-dinner sort of place." However, several "shareable" plates of bread, cheese, veggies, and chocolates are available. In addition, the rustic Barrel Room can be rented any day of the week for parties, company outings, bridal showers, etc. While the renovation of the building's 1st floor is finished, the 2nd floor still needs about a year's worth of work, according to Jeff Kirby. He plans to rent it out as office or event space. – Oak & Brazen is open daily except Mondays. Its website is www.oakandbrazen.com.

Choffey's Coffee & Confection

Choffey's Coffee & Confection is a popular hang-out place at 17 W. Winter St. You can find all kinds of people there – ranging from local residents to OWU students, from chess players to knitting clubs. They have great beverages of all kinds (no alcohol, though) and a huge selection of chocolates, candies, and popcorn. Food is not what Choffey's specializes in, but there is a modest selection of muffins and bagels as well.

Local Man Missing in Germany

On 1/5, local residents met at St. Mary Catholic Church to pray for Stephen T. Berichon who has been missing in Germany since Dec. 11. Berichon, 24, is a former St. Mary parishioner and St. Mary School student and is currently employed as an accountant at retailer L Brands in Columbus. Berichon was last seen as he set out on a weeklong hiking trip from Füssen in Upper Bavaria to Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Mittenwald. A segment of his hike may have taken him through Austria. His missed his Dec. 18 return flight to the U.S., and his parents have not heard from him in weeks. It is not clear what might have happened to him. Violent crime is much rarer than in the U.S., and there is no indication whatsoever that a crime occurred. However, an accident cannot be ruled out. Germany's many hiking trails are well cared for and not hazardous, but the area is very mountainous. On the other hand, Berichon, an ex-Marine, is tall and healthy, muscular and confident. German authorities are looking for the missing man, and newspapers and social media are urging people to contact police if they know anything. – Berichon's parents are currently residing in the Findlay area in Northwest Ohio. He has an uncle, Mike Berichon, who lives in Powell.



Small Sinkhole Closes US 23 S.

A small sinkhole between Hawthorn Blvd. and Meeker Way reduced southbound US 23 S. to one lane on Wed., Jan. 31. ODOT expected repairs to be completed by Feb. 2 or 3. – Small sinkholes are a fairly common problem, even in Central Ohio. There are dozens of sinkholes in the Scioto River watershed, for instance. When subterranean water erodes sand or soft rock, cave-ins are possible. Large sinkholes have swallowed entire houses and streets, but those are rare in Ohio.

Another Salvation Army Property for Sale

The Salvation Army is in process of liquidating its properties within the City of Delaware, but has no plans to abandon its local presence, according to a spokesperson. The 3.37-acre property at 252 Curtis St. (along Firestone St.) and the two church structures on it are now for sale for \$265,000 and listed with Columbus broker Skip Weiler. The description says, "perfect for another church use or redeveloped as another R-3 conditional use."

DELAWARE COUNTY & CENTRAL OHIO



John Russell Running for Congress

Rep. Pat Tiberi resigned effective Jan. 15, and there will be a special election for the 12th Congressional District in Ohio soon. 5 Democrats and 5 Republicans have announced plans to run for the vacant seat.

One of the Democratic candidates is John Russell of Galena (Delaware County). On Jan. 3, he spoke to a group of Delawarrians and provided information about his background and his rationale for running. Russell, 27, grew up in Wellsville on the Ohio River (Columbiana County), and received his B.S. in Agricultural Science from Cornell Univ. in 2012. He is currently the owner and manager of Fall Creek Farm (www.fallcreekfarm.org) in Galena, which organically grows 32 types of crops on 21 acres. The website of Fall Creek Farm says that Russell has been involved in agriculture since childhood – at his parents' dairy farm and for 11 years of 4-H. At FCF, it's all about the soil. Russell says, "We are proud stewards of the land because healthy soil makes healthy food. Our organic farming practices aim to preserve American farmland as the foundation of our communities for generations to come. When I'm not farming, I'm running tree stump removal and land restoration equipment all over Ohio. Fall Creek's stump removal and restoration business helps diversify and stabilize farm income." Russell is not a typical career politician who changes his or her positions with the wind and spends more time with donors and lobbyists than with constituents. Instead, he is used to hard work and very much focused on improving the lives of ordinary people and Ohio communities and to ensure that everyone can make "a decent living." Among his priorities are employment opportunities and infrastructure, health care and the opioid epidemic. Many of these things are personal to him. For example, some of his high-school classmates have overdosed on drugs, and he wants to create a pathway to treatment and recovery. He promised "to set foot on every inch of this district" during his grassroots campaign and, if elected, to be "a voice for everyone in our district." John Russell is young, but his community values and commitment to sustainability are uncommonly strong. He indeed would be an excellent choice for Congress. (Visit his website: www.russellforohio.com.)

Update: John Russell is scheduled to make an appearance at Beeghly Library (Bayley Room, 2nd floor) on the OWU campus on Thurs., Feb. 1 (7-9 pm).

SourcePoint Levy

The Delaware County Commissioners have decided to move ahead with a request for a 5-year, 1.2-mill SourcePoint renewal levy with a 0.1-mill increase (about 10%) on the May 8 ballot. If voters approve the measure, the levy would cost residents \$35.63 per \$100,000 or property value. SourcePoint, located at 800 Cheshire Rd. south of Delaware, offers a myriad of services, program, and activities for the county's growing population of seniors, incl. the county's popular "Wheels on Meals" program from which about 1,700 seniors benefit. At the current rate of growth, the older adult population is expected to reach 58,800 in 2030 and 82,000 in 2030. The proposed levy would generate about \$9.1 million annually, up from \$8.4 million currently and would take care of SourcePoint's needs for the next lustrum.

Delaware General Health District

Delaware County Health Commissioner Shelia Hiddleston provided City Council with a status report in January. The health district, which currently employs 75 people at its facility on W. Winter St., plans to open two full-service satellite offices, in Lewis Center and Sunbury. No timeline was provided. In addition, the DGHD has decided

to keep its main office in Downtown Delaware although parking and crowding remain a perennial problem.

Why Is the Humane Society Serving Meat? by Simon Plazolles-Hayes

The Humane Society of Delaware County (HSDC) does a lot of good work for animals in Central Ohio. They have reunited families with missing animal loved ones, and have created lasting friendships and family. That includes myself – I adopted Doctor the Cat and moved with him to Europe in 2015. Doctor is currently at home in London, but this holiday season I returned to Delaware to spend Christmas and New Year with my family. I still am on HSDC's mailing list, and I read their latest news and promotion for their upcoming flagship event – the 2018 Furball on Saturday, March 3. It is HSDC's largest fundraiser of the year, aiming to raise funds for the non-profit through drinks, silent auctions, and serving food. The food part stuck out at me. So I called them to find out about the menu. Although they promised a vegetarian option, this event will serve meat. I was shocked, disgusted, and dumbfounded that the organization that works to better the lives and welfare of animals is paying for others to mistreat, intimidate, and ultimately kill animals! Despite expressing my concern, and pointing out the cruel irony of the situation, the President of the HSDC hung up on me in anger. It doesn't seem unreasonable to ask that a non-profit with the word "humane" in its title, does not profit from the bodies of dead animals. In fact, it is a violation of their mission statement: "...building lifelong bonds between people and animals through education, community outreach, and the prevention of cruelty." There is nothing more cruel or inhumane than killing something that doesn't need to die. The issue isn't with the organization, but rather the indifference to institute a policy on food served at events, that reflect their mission statement and purpose. I urge you to write or call the local Humane Society and kindly ask them to start respecting the animal life they intend to protect, and cease promoting cruelty to some animals in an attempt to benefit other animals. The Humane Society of Delaware County can be reached at (740-) 369-7387. Their website is www.hscdohio.org.

"Community Matters" encouraged Simon Plazolles-Hayes to submit his letter to the editor of the "Delaware Gazette," which he did. Since it was not published there, it is printed here. – In our view, nobody should be forced to adopt a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle against their free will. However, we agree that it does seem odd that the local Humane Society, whose vision and mission is to protect companion and farm animals, is not modeling better behavior. It should set an example that others can follow.

Delaware County EMS Citizen Academy

The Delaware County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has announced the return of its Citizen Academy. The free 10-week workshop will run every Thursday evening (and on one Saturday) from March 22 through May 24. Each session will be devoted to a different aspect of life-saving services. A key featured is "Simulation Day," when participants join first responders for a drill. For more info, visit www.delcoems.org. The Delaware County EMS is located at 10 Court St. (ground floor), on the northwest corner of Central Ave. and Sandusky St.

Human Trafficking 101 Workshop

The Delaware County Against Human Trafficking (DCAHT) Coalition will present a free "Human Trafficking 101" workshop on Sat., Feb. 3 (9-11 am) at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Westerville (313 State Rt.). The introductory workshop will discuss the definition, scope, and prevalence of human trafficking in the U.S., with a focus on Ohio, incl. Delaware County. Participants will learn how & where human trafficking takes place, the psychological & physical effects of trafficking on victims, how to identify & help victims find resources, and how to join the local coalition. For more info & to register online, visit www.liveuniteddelawarecounty.org and click on the DCAHT tab, or call the United Way of Delaware County at 614-436-8929.

Gang Activity in Central Ohio

In January, the Columbus Dispatch reported that police have identified 40 gangs operating in the Columbus area, with more than 4,000 active members. A 2013 estimate spoke of up to 100 such drug, neighborhood, or street gangs. Some of them have been linked to violence and homicides, for example the various sects of Bloods gangs. Street monitors are noticing "an uptick" in gang activities and violence, drug trafficking being the main cause. Civic groups such as the NAACP and the Columbus Urban League are actively involved in efforts to curb gang and street violence. – We are not aware of similar gang activities going on in Delaware, but it is of course clear to everyone involved that the local county and city are closely affiliated with Franklin County and the City of Columbus in myriad ways. The Delaware Police Dept. (Bruce Pijanowski) informs us that while they have seen individual persons who represent themselves as belonging to gangs, they are so far "not seeing organized gang activity or violence that would be considered related to gang activity (e.g., turf wars, criminal enterprise, etc.)." However, it may be just a matter of time before the first gangs spring up in Delaware, a rapidly growing city that will reach the 40,000 milestone as early as this spring.

Speaking of gangs – the City of Columbus has started an initiative to reduce gang activities and violence. Suggested steps include more mentoring for young people; more opportunities for those leaving prison; and more resources to combat opioid addiction.

Struggling DATA Reduces Services

The Delaware Area Transit Agency (DATA) held two public hearings on Jan. 15 regarding service reductions. Due to lack of continuing federal funding, the transit board is considering the elimination of all Saturday routes, some Green Route and Pink Route services, and a reduction of 6:30 am & 5:30 pm runs on all 4 Delaware City weekday routes. Service changes are scheduled to go into effect March 1. – Not many Delawarians use mass transit although they should, for many reasons. It would alleviate some of Delaware's traffic and parking problems, for instance. Mass transit is also environmentally friendlier. It is true that Delaware has so far "not developed a philosophy toward mass transit," according to Commissioner Jeff Benton, but that's no excuse for underfunding the agency. Some populations depend on the fixed routes and the on-demand service. To learn more, visit www.ridedata.com or visit their office at 119 Henderson Ct., off London Rd.

Delaware County Historical Society

After 11 years of leadership, Brent Carson has stepped down to make room for the new president of the Delaware County Historical Society, Jack Hilborn. President emeritus Carson remains on the board of DCHS. An important focus for 2018 will be a successful capital-fund campaign to address critical needs. Jan Fleischmann serves as Vice President of Development. Donna Meyer is Executive Director of the organization. – The DCHS's mission is to promote, preserve, and sustain interest in the history of Delaware County. New members and volunteers are always welcome. To learn more, visit www.delawareohiohistory.org.

Radon Can Cause Lung Cancer

After smoking, radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer, according to the EPA. Radon, a naturally occurring gas, is responsible for about 20,000 lung-cancer deaths each year. Ohio's highest radon levels are found in Central Ohio. Franklin and all adjacent counties have levels that are above the EPA standard. The values are sometimes so elevated that some local and regional municipalities and counties have started to require new homes to include radon-removal systems. The top level considered safe is 4 picocuries per liter of air, but the counties of Licking and Logan have seen levels as high as 1,400 picocuries. There is currently no state requirement to test homes when they are sold, but health officials have suggested that all homes should be tested. Do-it-yourself test kits are relatively cheap (between \$15 and \$30) and even available for free from health departments in Franklin, Knox, and Licking County, but experts recommend long-term tests that are more reliable but also more expensive. In 2016, the DGHG provided information for a radon-testing kit under \$15. Radon-mitigation systems – PVC pipes that suck air out of the house – are typically between \$1,000 and \$2,000. Ohio started licensing radon companies in 2001.

Delaware County Bird Club

The Delaware County Bird Club meets every 4th Monday (6:30-9 pm) at Preservation Park's Deer Haven at 4183 Liberty Rd. Each meeting includes a program with time for questions and social interaction. Anyone interested in birds and nature is welcome. The next meetings are as follows: Mon., Feb. 26: Tom & Rosemary Domin will speak on "Raptors Nesting in Central Ohio." Mon., March 26: Wendell Patton will discuss "Vernal Pools." Mon., April 23: Dustin Reichard will present "Songs of the Dark-Eyed Junco." Free & open to the public.

Central Ohio Dog Breeds

According to information from Franklin County Auditor Clarence Mingo, the most popular dog breeds in Central Ohio are as follows: Labrador retriever (4,420), Chihuahua (2,863), Pit bull (2,398), German shepherd (2,383), Golden Retriever (2,262), Shih tzu (2,156), Yorkie (2,129), Beagle (2,051), Dachshund (1,876), Boxer (1,763), Jack Russell terrier (1,139), Goldendoodle (1,043). It seems, however, that the majority of dogs are mixed breeds of unknown origin (15,470) or partially known origin (Labrador mix 2,990, Terrier mix 1,380, Beagle mix 1,363, Pit bull mix 1,165, etc.).



Maple Syrup Time

Spring is not far off when maple-syrup announcements pop up all over the place. [Stratford Ecological Center](#) has its "Maple Sugar Tours" on Sat., Feb. 17, and Sat., Feb. 24 (10 am – 1 pm), followed by a Pancake Breakfast on Sat., March 3. [Preservation Parks of Delaware County](#) has a "Maple Syrup Time" program scheduled for Sat., Feb. 24 (9 am – 4 pm) at Gallant Farm (2150 Buttermilk Hill Rd.) where visitors can discover how maple sap is extracted from trees and cooked down into syrup. Lastly, [Camp Lazarus](#) at 4422 Columbus Pike (US 23 S.) has its Maple Syrup Festival on Sat., March 3 + 10, starting at 9 am.

Stratford Book Talks

Join retired librarian Liz Barker for evenings of thoughtful and stimulating discussions on a wide variety of topics involving the natural world, horticulture, homesteading, and more. The group meets every 4th Friday at 6:30 pm at the Stratford Ecological Center (3083 Liberty Rd.). The 2018 topics are Ocean Voyages (1/26), Women Scientists (2/23), Children & Nature (3/23), Pollinators & Habitat (4/27), Reclaiming Land (5/25), The Human Biome (6/22), Feeding the World (7/27), Volcanoes (8/24), Climate Change & Wildlife (9/28), Forgotten Arts & Skills (10/26), Coral Reefs (11/16, 3rd Fri.), and Charles Darwin (12/21, 3rd Fri.).

"New Vistas in Astronomy" at Perkins

Perkins Observatory, located at US 23 S next to MTSO, hosts numerous daytime and nighttime events throughout the year. Among the many programs is the "New Vistas in Astronomy" speaker series. Every 2nd Thursday of the month, astronomers & scientists from OWU and OSU will discuss a different topic. The next presentation will be Thurs., Feb. 8, when Scott Gaudi presents "The Kilodegree Extremely Little Telescope (KELT): Hot Planets around Hot Suns." Tickets are \$10 each or \$80 for the entire year. Visit <perkins.owu.edu> for more info.

MAD Scientist Associates

MAD Scientist Associates, based in Westerville, specializes in ecological and wetland consulting and services. Mark & Christine Dille are the co-owners of the company, which focuses on water resources. It also performs ecological surveys and conducts risk assessments. MAD is thoroughly familiar with state and federal environmental regulations and has strived for more than 15 years to arrive at sensible, sustainable, and cost-effective solutions that benefit clients and the environment. Mark Dille is frequently in Delaware. He and his associates will presumably once again be at the NOW Watershed Festival on Sat., June 16. If you need to hire a local and genuinely committed ecological consultant, check out MAD Scientist Associates,

LLC, located at 253 N. State St., Suite 101, in Westerville, OH 43081. Their website is www.madscientistassociates.net. Or give them a call at 614-818-9156.



Homes Made from Shipping Containers

"Cargominium," a 25-unit apartment complex built from shipping containers on Old Leonard Ave. in Columbus is thought to be the nation's largest apartment building made of shipping containers. Residents are expected to move in this spring. The nonprofit agency behind it, "Nothing Into Something Real Estate" (NISRE), is also building single-family houses made from shipping containers. A total of 9 container homes are planned for Bassett Ave., according to CEO Michelle Reynolds. – Shipping containers are part of an affordable housing solution as is the tiny-houses movement.

Columbus Changes Tax Incentives

Tax incentives are one way to lure developers and companies to cities and states. But in many cases, tax breaks don't help those who need them most. The City of Columbus is now changing its tax-incentive framework to address the issue. The biggest change would be offering incentives based on "distress" factors such as unemployment, crime, and blight. Under the proposal, to be eligible for a 100%, 15-year property-tax abatement from the city, housing developers will be required to set aside 20% of units for affordable housing or make a payment that will be used to aid other projects. Another step is not to provide tax incentives for jobs that pay less than \$15/hour, up from the current threshold of \$12/hour. The measures are in line with a nationally emerging consensus. The City of Delaware should take note.

Fine-Free Libraries

Libraries that don't charge fines for overdue materials are still a minority nationally, but they are spreading. The Delaware County District Library system went fine-free in 2016, and now Columbus Metropolitan Library is following suit. Ultimately, it boils down to a philosophical question of what the vision and mission of a library is. Today's growing consensus is that libraries should allow free and open access to resources and knowledge instead of creating barriers that prevent people from visiting. That was indeed part of the rationale provided by Delaware's public library: "Overall, fines scared patrons away from library resources, and they made little to no fiscal impact." The American Library Association certainly feels that reading is a right and has called for "the removal of all barriers to library and information services, particularly fees and overdue charges." The educational purpose of a library is more important than nickeling-and-diming people to death over unpaid fines. In the past, too many children and adults unable to pay simply stopped going to libraries altogether. The practice disproportionately disadvantaged poor folks and minorities, those with the greatest need to improve themselves. No-fine libraries still require patrons to be responsible users. Lost, stolen, or broken items must be paid for or replaced. If someone else requests the item in your possession, it must be returned or you will lose your borrowing privileges.

There is a broader lesson in all of this. Society is full of onerous barriers that often only those with means, knowledge, or connections can overcome. The justice system is an excellent example of that. Unfortunately, it is also true for post-secondary education. Privileged people have no idea how many obstacles there are for immigrants or minorities, for poor people or people with a criminal record, for the disabled or people without a car. In our view, all institutions should have a foundational commitment to helping people and providing resources, not specializing in meting out harsh penalties and punishments.

John Corby (1956-2018)

Columbus radio host John Corby has unexpectedly died at the age of 61. He had been ill and off the air for several days when he

passed away peacefully at Mount Carmel West hospital on Sat., Jan. 20. Over a span of more than 30 years, Corby entertained and educated many in Central Ohio. For the past 10 years, he worked for WTVN (610 AM). He was well-known for his down-to-earth and low-key approach when he discussed everyday subjects such as cars, food, sports, cell phones, the weather, or local matters in his folksy and humorous ways. An Ohioan himself, with an OSU degree, he understood the concerns and interests of his listeners and responded to them. In many ways, John Corby was the voice of Central Ohio, and he will be sorely missed. – Multiple video recordings with John Corby are available on YouTube.

Food Insecurity in Central Ohio

OSU researchers who surveyed more than 650 households in Central Ohio found high rates of food disparities in availability, accessibility, and affordability. "Stark inequalities exist," says Michelle Kaiser, the food study's lead author. Interestingly enough, most of the households had people with jobs, but the pay is not enough to cover expenses. More than 60% of the food-insecure households in the survey reported annual incomes of less than \$25,000. Less than half received SNAP assistance, and almost none got cash assistance. According to the study, there are entire neighborhoods that are invisible, ignored, and forgotten. The study found that many more households than previously known meet the government's definition of food insecurity. The lack of affordable and nutritional food (as well as lack of access to medical healthcare) takes a toll on children, adults, and the elderly. For example, infant mortality in Columbus is above the national average.

OHIO

Who's Running in the Ohio Elections?

Having difficulties keeping track of all the people running for office in Ohio and Congress? We do too. Even the newspapers got it wrong a few times. New names are constantly being added, some have dropped out, others have switched races. Here is our understanding of the current situation, but of course it is likely to change again before the Feb. 7 deadline:

Running for governor in Ohio are on the Democratic side: Richard Cordray (with Betty Sutton), Dennis Kusinich (with Nina Turner), William M. O'Neill (with Chantelle Lewis), Connie Pillich (with Scott Schertzer), and Joe Schiavoni (with Stephanie Dodd). On the Republican side are Mike DeWine (with Jon Husted) and Mary Taylor (with Nathan Estruth).

Running for the unexpired term of the 12th Congressional District seat that Pat Tiberi occupied until Jan. 15 are on the Democratic side: Ed Albertson, John Peters, John Russell, Zach Scott, and Doug Wilson. Jay Goyal has ruled out a run. On the Republican side are John Adams, Kevin Bacon, Troy Balderson, Marine Brandon Grisez, Jon Halverstadt, and Carol O'Brien. Tim Kane and Melanie Leneghan are reportedly also exploring a bid. The special election to serve the remainder of Tiberi's term this year is Aug. 7; the general election is Nov. 6.

Running against U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown are Melissa Ackison, Mike Gibbons, and Jim Renacci (with Amy Murray). (Josh Mandel dropped out of the race in January.)



Ohio's Green Party Candidates

News coverage often ignores third-party candidates. Uncontested Green Party candidates in the upcoming primary elections for Ohio governor and lieutenant governor are Constance Gadell-Newton and Brett Joseph. Constance Gadell-Newton is a Columbus attorney, gardener, and vegetarian. The "Constance for Ohio" (www.constanceforohio.com) platform includes solutions for creating jobs, a strong local economy, universal healthcare, and free & high-

quality public school education from pre-school through college. The website also states that the team will fight for the preservation of natural resources & clean water as well as for the abolition of Ohio's for-profit prison system.

Dennis Kusunich Is Fighting against Fracking

Ohio gubernatorial candidate Dennis Kusunich, 71, has announced that, if elected, he would issue an immediate moratorium on hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") in the State of Ohio, ban injection wells, and eliminate every last oil or gas well in the state. He also pledged to set up free public health screenings for Ohioans who live close to or downstream from fracking sites. For too long, he said, Ohioans have been abused, lied to, and victimized. He also lamented that the Buckeye State has become a dumping ground for toxic frackwaste from other states.

Kusunich and his running mate, Tara Samples, are essentially correct, but it is hard to see how they would overcome the solid wall of opposition from Ohio's oil-and-gas-friendly legislature when Governor John Kasich was not even able to impose a modest increase in the severance tax on Ohio wells. It is also worth noting that for many years Kusunich worked as a paid contributor to Fox News, the television channel that supports conservative causes. He defended Donald Trump and attacked the "deep state" on more than one occasion. He also serves on the Ron Paul Institute Advisory Board. While Kusunich may have name recognition, his believability and credibility are below average. It is almost impossible to say who the real Kusunich is and what his real convictions are.

Josh Mandel Quits Senate Race

On Jan. 5, Republican politician Josh Mandel made the announcement that he is quitting the Senate race against Democrat Sherrod Brown. He quoted an undisclosed illness of his wife as the reason for his change of mind. In reality, however, there is more to it than meets the eye. During the race, Mandel expressed sympathies for alt-right conspiracy theorists such as Mike Cernovich and Jack Posobiec. After the defeat of Roy Moore in Alabama and Steve Bannon's excommunication by President Trump there was no viable path forward for Mandel. In addition, there is a substantial history of ethics violations for which he was repeatedly criticized by the Ohio GOP. Last December, the Franklin County Republican Party refused to endorse him and chose someone else instead. – There is no reason to feel sorry for Mandel, though. In 2012, he reported that he and his wife, Ilana, were worth \$7.4 million. Mrs. Mandel is related to the Ratner family, which founded Forest City Enterprises, a leading national developer. Food insecurity is not an issue that the Mandel family will ever face.

Joe Schiavoni Picks Running Mate

In January, Ohio State Senator Joe Schiavoni became the first Democratic candidate for Ohio governor to pick a running mate. His choice was Stephanie Dodd, 38, a state school board member who has been vocal in her criticism of for-profit charter schools such as ECOT. A native of Zanesville, she lives in Buckeye Lake east of Columbus. While Republicans have launched a full-frontal attack against K-12 and higher education in the U.S., the selection of Dodd is a signal that under a Schiavoni administration education would play a central role. After Joe Schiavoni spoke in Delaware on 10/24, "Community Matters" published a favorable piece about him in the November 2017 issue. He is, in our view, a solid and trustworthy candidate. We cannot say the same thing about William O'Neill. Additional Democratic candidates for Ohio Governor are Richard Cordray, Connie Pillich, Betty Sutton, and Nan Whaley. On the Republican side, Mike DeWine, [Jim Renacci], and Mary Taylor are running for governor.

John Kasich's Dubious Legacy

Although John Kasich will have been Ohio Governor for 8 years (2011-2019), his impact on the state is hard to see and measure. He has not been a transformative governor, and Ohio has not progressed since Kasich took office. In many respects, the state actually fell behind and now ranks at or near the bottom in the nation – in opioid deaths, infant mortality, or environmental pollution, for instance. Despite "JobsOhio," job growth has not occurred. It also did not help that the governor spent half of his time in office running for

president, spending more time in other states than in Ohio. He worked the Granite State (New Hampshire) harder than he did the Buckeye State (Ohio). Under his watch, the education system fell from 5th to 22nd place nationally. Fraudulent charter schools such as ECOT began to erode the state's reputation; educational achievements remain low until this day. The same holds true for the promising renewable-energy industry, and the LGBT population is still not protected from employment and housing discrimination. Local communities received fewer tax dollars and were starved. Matt Mayer, president of Opportunity Ohio (a conservative think tank), says Kasich has "little to show" and that his legacy remains doubtful. It is true. From 2010-18, Ohio stagnated and even regressed. Those years were wasted, and people, businesses, and cities suffered and continue to suffer as a result from Kasich's flaws and failures.

Ohio Governor John Kasich will give his final State of the State Address on Tues., March 6, at Otterbein University in Westerville.

Where Does J. D. Vance Live?

In 2017, "Hillbilly Elegy" author J. D. Vance announced he "decided to move home, to Ohio" to found an organization to combat Ohio's opioid epidemic. In 2018 his place of residence suddenly became a political issue. Vance is a registered voter in Ohio from his German Village address in Columbus, a rental. However, his primary residence seems to be Washington, D.C., where his wife, Usha, is a clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts. Vance has political aspirations and is seriously considering running for the U.S. Senate against Sherrod Brown. Not living in Ohio, however, is rubbing some conservative Republicans the wrong way. Of course, that may just be a pretext on their part. They are mainly irritated with him because he did not support President Trump in 2016 and has taken what they say is "the wrong position" on guns. – At one point or another Vance will enter the political fray, but it seems doubtful that he will do so at this point in time.

Ohioans Like Renewable Energy

A recent statewide poll suggests that Republican politicians in Ohio are out of touch with their constituents. The Ohio Conservative Energy Forum, an advocacy group led by Mike Hartley, showed that 79% of self-identified conservative voters in Ohio support politics that encourage energy efficiency and greater use of solar, wind, and other forms of clean and renewable energy. A leading critic of renewable-energy mandates in Ohio, Rep. Bill Seitz of Cincinnati, rejected the conclusions of the poll. The political campaigns of many state politicians are supported by the fossil-fuel industry and people behind it such as the Koch Brothers. It is therefore not surprising that are beholden to corporate interests rather than what's in the best interest of their fellow citizens.

The Koch network just announced that it plans to spend between \$300 and \$400 million during the 2018 election cycle "to educate" the public and "to protect" those politicians who are friendly to the fossil industry. "Americans for Prosperity" just held a 3-day seminar in California to kick off the new campaign. About 550 donors who contributed a minimum of \$100,000 each were in attendance.

U.S. Supreme Court Discusses Ohio Voter Purge

The State of Ohio (John Husted) has started to purge voters from the rolls if they haven't voted in 6 years. It is "the most restrictive purge system in the country," according to the Columbus Dispatch. Ignoring voters' constitutional right not to vote, the state has begun to systematically disenfranchise minorities who tend to vote less frequently. The measure also has also negatively impacted people with medical issues or disabilities, the elderly, out-of-state students, and military personnel living overseas. Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown considers Ohio's practice a direct attack on democracy because, he says, the case is about "the government trying to choose who should get to vote." The U.S. Supreme Court has taken on the case and heard oral arguments on Jan. 10. Justice Sonia Sotomayor in particular asked pointed questions. The State of Ohio maintains that voters do receive a confirmation notice before their name is being purged and that "nobody is removed solely by failure to vote." A decision is not expected until May or June of 2018 and will probably be along party lines, with Justice Anthony Kennedy casting the deciding vote. – Imagine a use-it-or-lose-it scheme in other areas of your life, e.g., the right to drive, buy a gun, or use health insurance. It would be

preposterous. This is no different. It is the Ohio Attorney General's most important job to protect the rights of every citizen. That is not happening at the moment. Voters should pick their elected officials, not the other way around.

Ohio House Bill 160

House Bill 160, introduced by Rep. Nicki Antonio (D-Lakewood), would ban discrimination against the LGBT community in the areas of housing, employment, and public accommodation. Many organizations support the bill, incl. the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and Ohio Business Competes. Passing LGBT protections would make Ohio more inclusive and attractive to businesses, thus creating more jobs and opportunities for all. The Rev. J. Bennett Guess from the ACLU testified that Ohio has been on the wrong side of history for too long. Don Boy from the Ohio Chamber of Commerce stated, "In order to compete, Ohio businesses need the best and brightest talent from all walks of life to feel welcome and to call Ohio home." – There are exceptions for churches in the bill, but that did not stop the Ohio Christian Alliance (Chris Long) and the Citizens for Community Values (Aaron Baer) from criticizing the proposed bill, which in their view is "harmful."

Workers on Food Stamps

Dozens of retailers, restaurant chains, and hospitals pay to little that their workers qualify for food stamps. In Ohio, Walmart is the worst offender. Some 11,500 employees of Walmart are on public assistance because their income is below a certain poverty threshold, either because their hourly wages are at or near the minimum level or because they only work part-time. Essentially, it means that taxpayers subsidize subpar employers such as Walmart (#1), McDonald's (#2), Kroger (#3), Bo Evans (#4), Wendy's (#5), Dollar General (#6), Goodwill (#7), Taco Bell (#8), Speedway (#9), and Burger King (#10). With 1,430 workers receiving public benefits, rapidly expanding Amazon currently ranks 19th on the list of 50 large employers whose workers receive public benefits. Not only do companies such as Amazon receive tax incentives worth millions of dollars, they are also subsidized by public taxpayer money when they underpay or underemploy their workers. Over the decades, companies have learned to exploit many such loopholes by privatizing profits while asking taxpayers to shoulder the true economic, social, and environmental costs.

ECOT Closes Its Doors

The controversial Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECT), Ohio's largest online charter school, is no more. It shuttered its doors after its sponsor, the Educational Service Center (ESC) of Lake Erie West, unanimously voted to suspend the relationship on Jan. 19. Ohio law requires charter schools to have a sponsor. It is estimated that approximately 12,000 students and 800 employees will be impacted. ECOT and its founder, William ("Bill") Lager, had the enthusiastic support of Republican Ohio politicians in the beginning when it opened in 2000. There was little oversight of the for-profit charter school. In a story published on Jan. 21, the Columbus Dispatch suggested that ECOT was a fraudulent scam and criminal racket from the start, although it may be an uphill battle to prove that point in a court of law. In another story (Jan. 24), the Dispatch listed every politician who benefitted from ECOT's largess. (Lager contributed generously to the political campaigns of his Republican supporters, a practice that critics called kickbacks. If they will return the millions they received from ECOT remains to be seen.) In exchange, politicians turned a blind eye to the mounting evidence that something was amiss. The "school" received state funding for thousands of students who never existed and thousands more for whom it could not produce attendance records – money that was siphoned off from starving public schools. In addition, academic achievement was low or fictitious. ECOT argues to this day that it did provide "learning opportunities" as required by state law, but it did not track actual enrollment, participation, and achievement. This did not stop Ohio Auditor Dave Yost from giving ECOT awards for clean audit records on more than one occasion. In the meantime, Lager acquired multiple mansions, incl. a \$3.7 million home in Key West, Florida. One estimate says the total amount of misspent taxpayer money came to \$1 billion. Eventually, in 2016, the state had enough and reduced funding. It also demanded that ECOT start repaying \$80 million. Chances are, however, that the lost money

will never be recovered in its entirety. – The story of ECOT will serve as a cautionary tale for generations. At the very least, authorities must implement a better accountability system for private and charter schools. As far as Ohio voters are concerned, no politician who had a hand in ECOT, from John Kasich, Dave Yost, Mike DeWine, and Josh Mandel down to Andy Brenner should ever be trusted again. They will of course deny culpability (as Dave Yost just did), but the evidence is against them. It is hard to believe, but even today a handful of Republican lawmakers (Andy Brenner among them, one of ECOT's and Lager's beneficiaries) are defending the school and do not want to see it shut down and dismantled.

A Tariff on Newsprint

The U.S. Dept. of Commerce has decided to levy and collect tariffs on imports of Canadian newsprint and other paper products effective Jan. 16. In two articles, the Columbus Dispatch and its mother company, GateHouse Ohio, stated that the measure is adding almost 10% to the cost of newsprint. The price increase could lead to fewer subscriptions and thus job losses for the people who work for Ohio's more than 250 local newspapers. The trade organizations News Media Alliance and even the American Forest & Paper Association oppose the tariff. The U.S. newspaper publishing and commercial printing sector employs some 600,000 people across the U.S. The International Trade Commission will review the ruling, probably in March. Republicans used to be for free and fair international trade, but not anymore. We also know that the current U.S. administration is not a friend of a free and open press. The step taken by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce could well be seen as frontal attack against the very existence of print media similar to what's happening in other areas such as the safety net, environmental protection, or higher education. In an editorial on 1/14, the Dispatch told its readers: "Please help protect the future of newspapers by telling the Department of Commerce, Sen. Sherrod Brown, Sen. Rob Portman, or your U.S. Congress representative that you oppose the proposed newsprint trade tariff. A free press is more important than ever, and newspapers have always been at the forefront of serving our communities. We remain steadfast in our commitment to doing so. Now we could use your help to ensure that we can continue delivering the news you need."

Scrubbing Court Records

The Columbus Dispatch (1/3/18) made an interesting suggestion last month. To help young men create a future for themselves, the newspaper said: "And our political leaders need to look for ways to get young men out of gangs, which means opportunities to scrub nonviolent (but unemployable) offenses from court records and providing apprenticeships for decent jobs." – We wholeheartedly agree. 95% of the nation's prison population will eventually be released, but often past offenses (even non-violent "crimes" such as smoking marijuana as a student) can ruin a person's life forever. Forgiveness is at the heart of all religions. Why can't the criminal-justice system be equally enlightened and humane? People can learn from their mistakes and change, and it is better for society as a whole to allow their prodigal sons (and daughters) to return from the wilderness and to become productive citizens once again.

Blacks Remain Disadvantaged in Ohio

City, county, and state officials praised Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on Jan. 14. But their pronouncements and resolutions ring hollow considering how far behind blacks lag in Ohio. On 1/14, the Columbus Dispatch provided the following summary: the average black Ohioan has a life expectancy that is 4 years shorter than that of whites; the infant-mortality rate is more than double than that of white babies; the incarceration rate of blacks is 5 to 6 times higher than that of whites; the percentage of blacks living in poverty is 31%; and the median household income for black Ohioans has dipped as a percentage of white household income. The prospects for African-American Ohioans remain bleak in 2018. The Ohio Legislative Black Caucus has zero members among Republicans, who are in control of the state government, and resources have plummeted.

OEFFA Meets in Dayton (2/15-17)

The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA), formed in 1979, is holding its 39th annual conference from Thurs. through Sat., Feb. 15-17, at the Dayton Convention Center, 22 E. 5th

St., the same venue as last year. The OEFFA is Ohio's largest sustainable food & farm convention. Typically, there are about 100 workshops and speakers on all facets of sustainable agriculture, gardening, forestry, food, and cooking. There are even presentations on oral history, medicinal plants, the environmental cost of fracking, raising farm kids etc. Keynote speakers will be Jeff Moyer ("Organic No-Till Farming") and Stacy Malkan ("Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry"). Plus, there are various pre-conference programs, workshops, a trade show, seed swaps, book sales, networking opportunities, food vendors, child care, entertainment, etc. This is a great and inspirational conference, but participation is not cheap. However, in exchange for 4 hours of on-site work, pre-approved volunteers may pre-register for only \$70. For more info, visit www.oeffa.org.



David Lucas, Ohio's New Poet Laureate

In 2014, Ohio became the 45th state to create a poet laureate post. The first occupant was Columbus scientist and physician Dr. Amit Majmudar. Now Clevelander David Lucas, 37, has been named Ohio's new poet laureate for a 2-year period. He is a frequently published and award-winning poet who has also taught at Case Western Univ. and John Carroll Univ. His first volume, "Weather," appeared in 2012. Below is one of his poems:

Lines for Winter **By Dave Lucas**

*Poor muse, north wind, or any god
who blusters bleak across the lake
and sows the earth earth-deep with ice.
A hoar of fur stung across the vines:
here the leaves in full flush, here
abandoned to four and farther winds.
Bless us, any god who crabs the apples
and seeds the leaf and needle evergreen.
What whispered catastrophe, winter.
What a long night, beyond the lamplight,
the windows and the frost-ferned glass.
Bless the traveler and the hearth he travels to.
Bless our rough hands, wind-scabbed lips,
bless this our miscreant psalm.*

New Rules for the Welfare of Farm Animals

New regulations for Ohio farm animals went into effect on Jan. 1. They are part of a sweeping deal reached in 2010, brokered by Wayne Pucelle of the national Humane Society. Veal producers can no longer confine calves to veal crates where they are unable to love or turn around. Dairy cows can no longer have their tails docked. Also in effect is a moratorium on new construction of chicken egg farms using battery cages. The same agreement includes a ban on gestation stalls for Ohio's growing hog farms, but that rule does not go into effect until 2025 to give hog farmers more time to comply. – Other states are also implementing similar crate, stall, and cage measures.

TNR Works!

Many people around the state and the nation – bless their hearts! – take care of stray and feral cats by feeding and sheltering them, sometimes against the wishes of authorities. Countless volunteers run "trap, neuter/spay, return" (TNR) programs, often at their personal expense. TNR works because it prevents cats from having additional babies. If cities such as Bellefontaine, Urbana, or Vandalia were to enact a feeding & sheltering ban of wildlife, the result would be more fertile cats, more offspring, and more feral animals. Any such ban would be shortsighted and counterproductive. TNR is widely practiced in Columbus and Franklin County where between

400,000 and 1 million feral cats live. Delaware, too, has cat colonies, but they don't seem to pose a problem to anyone.



Honeysuckle

Ohio Restricts the Sale of Invasive Plants

The State of Ohio has taken the sensible step of banning the sale and distribution of 38 non-native plants that are invasive and destructive. In the past, there were no rules that prevented their sale. Effective Jan. 7, "no person shall sell, offer for sale, propagate, distribute, import or intentionally cause the dissemination of any invasive plant" on the list. In case of violations, the plant can be seized and destroyed. The list includes grasses and flowers, shrubs and trees. Many of the plants were at one point favorites of nurseries due to desirable traits such as low maintenance, aggressive growth, or big leaves. Invasive species crowd out native plants, often taking water and sunlight from endangered or threatened species. Included in the list are various types of honeysuckles, Bradford pear trees, autumn olive shrubs, and the Japanese barberry shrub. A ban for callery pear will go into effect 5 years from now. Notorious other species on the list are cattail cultivars, garlic mustard, giant hogweed, phragmites (a reed), and kudzu. The Ohio Dept. of Agriculture (ODA) has also created a 5-member advisory committee for invasive plants to review potential future additions. (For the complete list, check ODA's website or write to us.)

Flu Season

By all accounts, the flu season is bad this winter. When people are crowded together inside, the risk of infection increases. The outbreak will eventually plateau, but sometimes it does not end until May. Typically, it runs from October through March. Health officials do not track the number of children and adults diagnosed with the flu, but visits to doctors and emergency rooms as well as hospitalizations due to influenza A (H3N2) are up. H3N2 is the most dangerous of the seasonal flu strains. Of greatest concern are the very young, the elderly, and people with immune-system problems. At least two children have already died in Ohio this season, according to the Ohio Dept. of Health. According to the CDC, even in a mild year flu causes 9 to 35 million illnesses, results in 140,000 to 710,000 hospitalizations, and kills about 12,000 to 56,000 Americans. Experts recommend flu shots (still considered the best defense), limited contact with others, and regular hand-washing. To avoid spreading the infection, sick people should stay at home from work or school.

NATION

The Long-Term Economic Outlook Is Grim

In January, the Dow broke the 25,000 and then the 26,000 barrier for the first time. Unemployment is low, foreclosures are at a 12-year low, technology stocks are soaring, the bull market is in full swing. The skies are clear, and there is not one cloud on the horizon. Why then is everyone so nervous about the economy? Why are investors spooked? It is because experts know that the market is overheated and overvalued. It is due for a correction, reversal, and another bear market. The country is in the last stages of an economic expansion. It is just a matter of time before the bubble will burst and the party will be over. There are perhaps 6 months or 12 months before the inevitable happens, but happen it will – with devastating economic, social, and political consequences for the nation and its population of 327 million. The retrenchment will definitely set in before President Trump's term expires, so he will have to answer some tough questions down the road. In fairness, however, economic cycles are not something the president or the government control – although they do like to take credit for it when everything goes well.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce at Odds with Trump

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is one of the most powerful, influential, and highest-spending lobby groups in Washington, D.C. In several areas, it is in sync with the current White House, for example when it comes to tax cuts and regulatory rollbacks. However, in several other areas the two entities are at loggerheads. The most important one is trade. Chamber members (farmers, manufacturers, banks, etc.) benefit tremendously from international trade organizations such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and trade with Europe and Asia. They do not wish to lose those markets. Not being able to sell abroad would mean heavy job losses in the U.S. and fewer profits. Another major area of disagreement is immigration. Chamber members heavily depend on the manual labor and intellectual knowledge immigrants provide in numerous fields, incl. the economy, the STEM sciences, and the hospitality industry. A key issue is DACA, which protects approximately 800,000 people brought to America as children. The Chamber is leading a coalition calling for an agreement that would protect the so-called dreamers from deportation. Additional disagreements exist over the crumbling infrastructure, a high priority for the Chamber, as well as over the extent to which high-tech companies should be reined in. In short, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which is pursuing a pro-growth strategy, is concerned about the White House tendency to retreat and retrench. It is also concerned about the perennial dysfunction that has roiled the White House for the past year. In a recent speech, Chamber President and CEO Thomas Donohue warned President Trump, the White House, and Congress that a continuation of current policies "would send us five steps back."

Afghanistan – America's Longest War

There is no end in sight for the war in Afghanistan that began in 2001. Devastating attacks on offices, hotels, convoys, villages, and infrastructure continue. For almost two decades, the American public has heard that a corner has been turned, that the country has been stabilized, and the war was coming to a close. None of that was ever real despite the presence of up to 100,000 American soldiers at peak times. The U.S. has been fighting the same battles over and over again. The BBC just reported that the Taliban have "an active presence" in 70% of the country. Now President Trump is predicting victory after increasing the total number of American troops in Afghanistan to 15,000: "What nobody else has been able to finish, we're going to be able to do that." – Two thousand years ago, the Roman empire attempted to conquer and pacify the untamed Germanic tribes. Historian Tacitus warned them that it could not be done. After the devastating loss of 3 Roman legions (10% of the entire army) in northwestern Germany, the empire gave up. The former Soviet Union learned the same lesson in Afghanistan before withdrawing in 1989. When will the U.S. admit that its war in Afghanistan is a fool's errand?

Support for Trump among Workers Is Waning

In January 2017, President Trump was supported by 45% of union workers while 55% did not support him. Now only 37% of union workers approve of the president while 63% disapprove. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, who initially supported Trump and flirted with an alliance with him last year, has since changed his tune. He now says that Trump has divided the country, abandoned the values of blue-collar workers, given cover to racism, made the workplace less safe, and has actively hurt working people. Trump's tax plan, he added, favors companies over ordinary citizens. Support for Democratic candidates, on the other hand, is once again rising, including in Rust Belt states.

Trump's Health

Trump's White House physician, Dr. Ronny L. Jackson, said in his annual report that the president was in "excellent" health. However, most medical experts agree that this assessment is probably too rosy considering Trump's age (71), weight (239 pounds), high cholesterol level (143), sedentary lifestyle, practice of eating junk food, and lack of meaningful exercise. His coronary calcium buildup has increased to 133. Given the circumstances, the current president is definitely at risk for heart problems. On the plus side, he has no history of drinking or smoking and does not have diabetes. Dr. Jackson recommended fewer cheeseburgers and a new fitness regimen, but Trump is not known to be a man who likes to be told what to do and to be managed by others.

Trump also voluntarily underwent a mental-health exam, the so-called Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA), which he aced (30 out of 30). However, the test is so easy that any first grader could pass it. One question asks to name three animals (a lion, rhino, and camel). MoCA does not assess critical thinking & problem solving, reasoning and judgment, so even people in the early stages of dementia can pass it without difficulties.

The Sufferings of Melania Trump

After a Wall Street Journal article about an alleged affair that Donald Trump had with porn star "Stormy Daniels" (Stephanie Clifford), First Lady Melania Trump has been a rare sight. She refused to accompany her husband to Davos in January and has been living and traveling alone for some time now. Reports of \$130,000 hush money for Stormy Daniels infuriated the First Lady, who was blindsided. In the past, she had defended her husband against allegations of transgressions, but not this time. There was even uncertainty about her participation in the State of the Union address on Jan. 30, but she did relent somewhat and attended, arriving separately. After a recent solo visit to the Holocaust Museum, a not-so-subtle message on its own, she expressed sympathy for people whose lives and families were "broken." There may well be something broken inside her as well.

CDC Director Resigns

The director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, has resigned amidst allegations of significant financial investments in tobacco and healthcare companies. Fitzgerald's financial interests posed so many conflicts of interests that she had to recuse herself from numerous presentations, interviews, and decisions that involved cancer, opioids, and tobacco. That limited her ability to serve as an effective director. Dr. Anne Schuchat, a veteran official with the CDC, was named acting director. – Unfortunately, Fitzgerald is not the only individual with major conflicts of interest in the Trump administration.

Oprah Winfrey for President?

At the 75th Golden Globes, Oprah Winfrey received the Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement, the first black woman to be so honored. The entertainer has been involved in recent months in an action plan against sexual harassment and rape, so that is what she focused on in her rousing acceptance speech – male violence against women, and white violence against blacks. It might be worth noting that Oprah did not condemn all men and all whites. She acknowledged that she had male mentors, that many men do choose to listen, and that there are phenomenal men fighting hard alongside women for a brighter tomorrow and a better future. In her speech, Oprah also voiced her strong support for the media and thanked the Hollywood Foreign Press Association: "You all know the press is under siege these days. You also know it is the insatiable dedication to uncovering the absolute truth that keeps us from turning a blind eye to corruption and to injustice, to tyrants and victims and secrets and lies. I want to say I value the press more than ever before as we try to navigate these complicated times."

After her enthusiastically received speech, people on the internet were once again suggesting that Oprah run for president in 2020. Indeed, in many respects she would be an excellent choice. She is enormously popular and successful. Also, she has compassion and common sense and is an exceptional communicator. She embraces the kind of values that the majority of Americans are now missing. There would not be distracting questions about her mental fitness for the office. In addition, she has not forgotten her humble beginnings (her mother cleaned other people's houses) and understands human nature well: "In my career, what I've always tried my best to do, whether on television or through film, is to say something about how men and women really behave. To say how we experience shame, how we love, and how we rage, how we fail, how we retreat, persevere, and how we overcome." Oprah would be a president who would understand what motivates people. She would lift people up, not belittle them. Instead of saying, "You are fired," she would get every family a free car. She could be the president who might be able to unite a badly polarized America.

And yet, the nation's proclivity to stumble from one cult of personality to another charismatic leader is deeply disturbing. It means

a devaluation of actual expertise and experience, knowledge and wisdom in favor of fame and celebrity. Even though Oprah Winfrey would be a benign dictator compared to Donald Trump, her coronation would mean the end of democracy. Voters would be relegated to the role of an audience and fan club that enjoys the show instead of being engaged and autonomous citizens.

The 2020 Census

The government has always sought to count everyone in the U.S., legally or otherwise, since its first census in 1790. A complete and accurate census has been the top priority for more than 200 years. Not so this time around. Under the leadership of Jeff Sessions, the Justice Dept. wants the next census to ask people about their citizenship status. A census that tracks citizenship status, however, will be a disincentive for people to answer the questions accurately or completely. Fearing prosecution, many distrustful Latinos and other minorities are likely to ignore the census. This, in turn, might result in substantially inaccurate population numbers and, by extension, unfair redistricting of the House and state legislatures. In some states the numbers could be off by the millions. Experts agree that a citizenship query would depress responses. Skeptics and cynics say this is precisely the intent of the Justice Dept.'s proposal – to deliberately undercut the Latino population, which votes reliably Democratic, by intimidating and silencing it. It is clear from the available evidence that the GOP's top priority is not a complete and accurate census. Instead, its goal is to hold on to power for as long as possible and by any means necessary.

Culture Wars on Hold for Now

2018 is going to be a challenging year for Republicans. They may lose seats in the upcoming elections, and large corporations such as Amazon are also watching the behavior of conservative politicians carefully because they cannot and will not operate in states with extreme ideologies. Any legislation that creates headwinds for economic development and growth is unappealing to them. What companies need and want is an educated workforce and a modern infrastructure, not distracting culture wars over gay rights, voter disenfranchisement, or climate change. For that reason, the pace of culture wars has slowed down markedly. Fewer controversial bills are being introduced lest big corporations get spooked and stay away. It's also better for the country as a whole this way. Will the respite be temporary or permanent? Given America's appetite for religious answers rather than real solutions, it is doubtful that the peace will last.



Chelsea Manning Running for Senate

Chelsea Manning has had a more eventful life at 30 than most others at 60 or even 90. She has now filed to run for the U.S. Senate in Maryland, which she considers her home state. She is challenging Democratic Sen. Ben Cardin in the June 26 primary. Her move surprised the Maryland establishment. Incumbent Cardin seems securely ensconced, but Manning does have national name recognition and the support of a lot of progressive donors. – Manning, then known as Bradley Manning, was convicted in 2013 of disclosing classified documents to the public and was sentenced to 35 years in prison. She was confined from 2010 to 2017 under cruel and unusual conditions and was considered around the world to be a political prisoner. Many laud her as a national hero, but for others she remains a traitor.

LGBTB Film Wins Sundance Award

Desiree Akhavan's film "The Miseducation of Cameron Post" won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. Based on a 2012 book by Emily M. Danforth, the movie is about a lesbian teenage girl who is sent to a gay-conversion center ("God's Promise") to "cure" her from her "illness." Despite the center's efforts, the conversion attempts backfire as Cameron accepts her sexuality and joins a close-knit gay community. The film's star is Chloë Grace

Moretz; she dedicated the award to survivors of the discredited practice. "Sexual-conversion therapy" is illegal in only 9 U.S. states. It remains legal in 41 states, incl. in Ohio. A recent report states that some 700,000 adults in the U.S. have received conversion therapy at one point in their lives, including 350,000 who received the harmful & useless treatment as adolescents. Medical & psychological groups have denounced the practice, which has no basis in science.

Kentucky Governor Discusses Gun Violence

Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin, a Republican and social conservative, had some interesting things to say about gun violence. In the wake of a recent high-school shooting in Benton, Kentucky, he called school shootings "a cultural problem" in America: "We have become desensitized to death, we have become desensitized to killing, we have become desensitized to empathy for our fellow man," he stated. He continued by saying, "We can't celebrate death in video games, celebrate death in TV shows, celebrate death in musical lyrics and remove any sense of morality and sense of higher authority and then expect that things like this are not going to happen." – Bevin is not the first to see a connection between mass media and gun violence. We agree with him on the essential point of his argument. He falls short, however, of offering a convincing and viable solution. He admitted that he had "no answers" that would explain "the inexplicable." He also made it clear that he would not sign any laws that restricted guns. All he did is urge his fellow Kentuckians to form prayer groups to walk high-crime neighborhoods. While prayer can never hurt, we happen to believe that deep problems in society, including the proclivity toward violence and the almost unregulated proliferation of firearms, demand additional steps.

Is Scarlet Fever Returning?

Scarlet fever used to be the leading cause of death among children in the past. It is discomfiting to hear that the disease is currently making a comeback around the world, in countries ranging from Great Britain to several Asian countries, incl. China. Caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus pyogenes*, outbreaks are usually mild. However, the new cases are caused by various new strains of streptococcus that are not well understood, and there is no vaccine. Dangerous mutations are always a possibility. The 2014-16 British outbreak, for instance, remains unexplained; it seemed to have little to do with poor hygiene. Another problem is that scarlet fever is not a reportable disease in the U.S., and the CDC does not track the condition. Reports of spikes in America are therefore anecdotal in nature rather than empirically proven. Dr. John Barnard, President of the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, recently wrote in the "Columbus Dispatch": "Despite advances in knowledge and technology, we have so much to learn about the world we live in. There is great risk in becoming complacent in our country's investment in research. For once-deadly diseases such as scarlet fever, the history of medicine tells us, we must be on guard. The current scarlet-fever outbreaks are a warning that, like an army, we must remain on the alert with the latest and greatest minds, knowledge and technology in science and health care." – What Dr. Barnard is not saying, but clearly implying, is that science and higher education are currently under attack by the Trump administration. The tax plan will decimate universities and the research conducted there on multiple levels. The know-nothings who are currently in control of the government are doing their best to catapult America back into the dark ages of illiteracy and innumeracy. As a result, diseases long thought to be eradicated will return to the U.S.

Michael Wolff's "Fire and Fury"

An explosive book appeared on Jan. 5, Michael Wolff's "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" (Henry Holt 2018, 336 pp., \$30). It is based on more than 200 interviews with the president, his inner circle, and key players within and without the administration. In the book, Wolff lifts the lid on a White House violently lurching from crisis to crisis amid internecine warfare, with even some of President Trump's closest allies voicing contempt for him and calling him an "idiot," a "dope," or a "moron." Interviewees essentially agree that Trump has a narcissistic personality disorder and is cognitively on the level of an immature child with constant temper tantrums that insists on instantaneous gratification and is incapable of learning. Steve Bannon is a central figure in this nasty, cutthroat drama, which the

White House has condemned as “trashy tabloid fiction” and “pure fantasy.” Trump tried to block publication and sharply distanced itself from Bannon, once the president’s chief strategist. He has assured the nation that he is a “very stable genius,” but questions whether the 25th Amendment applies in this case keep popping up. – Wolff is the author of 6 prior books, incl. a biography of Rupert Murdoch (“The Man Who Owns the News”), but it is this gossipy and scabrous title that might make him (in-) famous forever. He says he merely reported what his sources told him, but foes of the book have raised questions about the veracity of some of his factual details. – The book is the fastest-selling nonfiction bestseller in the 151-year history of Henry Holt and is being read around the world. For a while, the print edition was sold out. Endeavor Content has since acquired the filming rights.



Is Stephen K. Bannon Finished?

At one point, Steve Bannon was seen as the brilliant strategic mastermind behind Trump. Some called him a “kingmaker,” a “Svengali-like figure,” or Trump’s “puppeteer.” However, his political capital started to deteriorate after he left the White House in August and his candidate Roy Moore lost the Senate race in Alabama in December 2017. Now President Trump has disavowed and defenestrated him in clear terms, and Breitbart’s board of directors has ousted him after the painful loss of the financial backing by the Mercer family. Has the Republican establishment won and is the alt-right populist finished? Bannon’s fall from grace was a steep one. He is certainly in the opposition now, a persona non grata, cut off from any real power. That part and phase of his career is over. But it might be too early to write him off. Bannon, 64, continues to have a restless mind, and he has done numerous other things in his life prior to being catapulted into the limelight. There is no reason to believe that we won’t ever hear from him again.

Patrick Deneen’s Indictment of Liberalism

Political Science professor Patrick Deneen has published a provocative new book: “Why Liberalism Failed” (Yale UP, 2018, 248 pp.). Liberalism, which started with the Enlightenment, promised “liberté, égalité, fraternité.” Centuries later, however, society is at a point where economic inequality is greater than ever, and the ideology of ruthless meritocracy has resulted in a new aristocracy. It promised freedom and autonomy, but in actuality it meant alienation from nature, tradition, religion, and community. It detached people from time and place. It promised brotherhood and sisterhood, but it has resulted in a new class system of winners and losers. It also promised autonomy and privacy, but what we have today is a comprehensive system of nation states complete with 24/7 surveillance and mass incarceration. Liberalism, Deneen concludes, was the road to ruin. It is a bankrupt project and an unmitigated disaster. We ended up with a deracinated “society that is atomized, distrustful, and divided” (David Brooks). Readers may quibble with specific points that the author raises, but it is clear that the book reflects a profound discontent with the political establishment.

What is the alternative to “liberalocracy”? Not communism and fascism, of course – two other thoroughly discredited ideologies. Deneen rejects grand ideological systems and proposes a return to smaller structures instead (e.g., local associations, farming groups, communities of care, or congregations). Nothing less than a new covenant and order might be required, based on more modest and flexible values that respect the dignity and integrity of individuals and families and on a better relationship with nature. His thoughts on the environment, says the New York Times, “sound as if they came straight out of a Greenpeace brochure.” Only after a period of revival and renewal can decency and civility once again flourish.

Meet Composer John Luther Adams

John Luther Adams is a modern American composer, born in 1953 in Meridian, Mississippi. After graduating from the California Institute of the Arts, he began working in the field of environmental protection. He took a liking to Alaska and lived there from 1978 to 2014. During that time, he also served as Associate Professor of Music at Ohio’s Oberlin Conservatory of Music (1998-2002). He now divides his time between New York and a desert region in Mexico. Adams is a composer whose music is deeply inspired by the natural world and its timelessness and universality. The title of many of his works have references to nature’s landscapes and soundscapes. He has been praised for his ability to fuse the physical and the musical worlds into a unique artistic vision. He is probably best known for his Pulitzer Prize-winning work “Become Ocean,” which premiered in 2013. A very recently performed work for nine players, “there is no one, not even the wind,” comes directly from his experience in the Mexican desert. It is a piece in which time stands still. In fact, so little happens in the 26-minute piece that classically trained “New York Times” reviewer Anthony Tommasini admitted he was getting bored and impatient. Adams’ work spans many genres and media, but it is not for everyone. When you have a chance, listen to some of his works on YouTube.



Ursula Le Guin (1929-2018)

Brilliant & Award-Winning Writer
of Fantasy & Science Fiction and

Fearless Feminist & Environmentalist, Humanist & Moralist

“The law of evolution is that the strongest survives!” – Yes, and the strongest, in the existence of any social species, are those who are most social. In human terms, most ethical... There is no strength to be gained from hurting one another. Only weakness.” (Ursula Le Guin)

Igor Levit – Pianist of the Resistance

Pianist Igor Levit, 30, just won the prestigious Gilmore Award that is given every four years to mature young artists who explore new horizons.

There are people who believe that certain things should remain “pure,” “untainted,” and “uncorrupted” of political interference. A good example is classical music. However, such people are misguided. The great composers all had their political agendas, and their music reflects that. Beethoven, for example, fought for freedom and democracy and abandoned his support for Napoleon Bonaparte as soon as the French newcomer started to exhibit imperial tendencies. Wagner, on the other hand, believed in a conservative revolution. His dream was the recreation of the medieval world of Germanic grandeur. Beethoven specialist Igor Levit, born in 1987, does not separate art, life, and politics either. For the young musician, they are inseparably intertwined. On November 9, 2016, the day after the current American President was elected, he spoke directly to his audience in Brussels and condemned Trump’s presidency in clear terms. Beethoven would have approved. During a recital in Brexit-obsessed England, he played the official anthem of the European Union. Levit is an unusual pianist, but he may pave the way for other politically engaged musicians. He was born in Russia in 1987, but his family moved to Germany when he was 8. Of Jewish descent, he has a keen interest in the situation of European migrants has traveled to refugee camps to take a first-hand look. He is also deeply worried about the rise of the fascist right in Europe. His apartment in Berlin has books by James Baldwin and Thomas Piketty. And he has a close musical relationship with Frederic Rzewski (b. 1938), a passionately political American pianist and composer on the left. For example, Levit has played and recorded Rzewski’s 36 piano variations, “The People United Will Never Be Defeated.”

Drinking Raw Water Is Not Advisable

A new trend involves the selling and drinking of unfiltered and untreated "raw water," taken directly from natural springs and streams. While it may sound like a healthy and appealing alternative, it is not. Few water sources remain untainted in the 21st century. Due to industrial and agricultural pollution, even water that looks clean can be contaminated with toxic chemicals or pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, or parasites. Raw water, also known as "live water," often contains urine and feces from animals, dead matter, microbes, and other impurities. Seasoned hikers and campers, naturalists and environmentalists know better than to drink directly from a natural source without precautions such as filtration, purification, boiling, or similar practices. While raw water may not sicken or kill healthy people with intact immune systems, drinking it significantly increases the risk of getting sick. The argument that raw water can help build a more robust immune system is only partially true. While the human body can perhaps overcome E. coli bacteria or similar contaminants, it has no effective defense against hazardous chemicals or invasive parasites. – In our preliminary assessment, the raw-water fad is a snake-oil scam, especially when considering that a single gallon of supposedly "earth-filtered" water or glacier water can cost up to \$60.

FDA Warns against Kratom

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a strong warning to consumers to stay away from the herbal supplement Kratom. Consumers are increasingly using the Asian supplement for chronic pain, anxiety, and depression as well as symptoms of opioid withdrawal. Because of the euphoria it produces, some people also use it recreationally. However, the FDA says that there is no reliable evidence to support the use of Kratom for medicinal purposes. In fact, the herb has similar effects to narcotics like opioids and carries similar risks of abuse, addiction, and even death. The herb is associated with seizures, liver damage, and withdrawal symptoms. Regulators are aware of at least 36 deaths linked to products containing the herb.



Detroit Opens New Velodrome

On Jan. 29, Detroit, Michigan, opened a new indoor bicycling track that is expected to serve both amateurs and athletes during the cold winter months. The Lexus Velodrome is an inflatable, climate-controlled dome, one of only 3 indoor velodromes in the country. Outdoor velodromes, on the other hand, are not uncommon. An anonymous donor, a native of Detroit, put up \$5 million for the facility. – As bicycling is gaining in popularity, it would be nice if Central Ohio too had a place where bicyclists could exercise year-round in weather and traffic conditions that are not detrimental to their health and safety.

WORLD

France & Germany Are Fighting Fake News

French President Emmanuel Macron has stated that the systemic proliferation of "fake news" is a deliberate strategy to undermine Western democracies. He has proposed legislation that would ban such propagandistic disinformation. In the future, the sponsors of fake news must be more transparent by disclosing their identity and their source of funding. He is also looking at a funding cap on the amount of money they receive from "sponsored content." His proposal would also make possible for courts to expeditiously intervene and suppress fake news, especially during elections. Macron's announcement came at the same time Germany began to enforce its own new law against fake news. Effective Jan. 1, the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) forces all internet platforms with more than 2 million users to implement a system for reporting and scrubbing potentially illicit content, including hate speech and fake news. Facebook, Twitter, Google, YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram all came under the new law, but professional networks like LinkedIn and Xing are expressly excluded, as are messaging services like WhatsApp.

The right-wing parties in both countries have condemned the initiatives. – The memory of fascism and Nazism is still very much alive in European countries. In the U.S., where the concept of "free speech" is almost absolute, it might be more difficult to implement similar laws.

Great Britain Tackles Loneliness

Even though there are 7 billion people on Earth, epidemic levels of loneliness are a sad reality in the modern world. Wealthy countries are particularly impacted, in part people there are less dependent on each other than in poorer countries. Isolation, depression, and alienation are not limited to particular age groups or socioeconomic classes. It affects the young and the old, men and women, the abled and disabled, citizens and immigrants. In the United Kingdom, more than 9 million people often or always feel lonely, according to a British report. Government research has shown that 200,000 older people in the UK had not had any interaction with a friend or relative in over a month. Isolation can lead to a greater risk of depression, anxiety, dementia, cardiovascular disease, and even suicide. The country has now concluded that loneliness at home, school, and the workplace needs addressing. A national conversation is underway to assess and measure the scope and depth of the problem. In the typical fashion of government, Prime Minister Theresa May has now appointed a minister for loneliness, Tracey Crouch. It is not clear yet what he can and will do, but support groups have sprung up to help alleviate the situation. Reaching out to others and helping them is more important than ever, even if it is only a short conversation.

USA Falls in Popularity

Preliminary numbers indicate that since President Trump's inauguration the United States has fallen in international popularity. As predicted, fewer tourists and students came to the U.S. in 2017. In a year when international tourism grew by a healthy 7-8%, international travel to the U.S. shrank. Everything indicates that France will retain its #1 spot in international tourism, but Spain (82 million visitors) has now surpassed the U.S. (75.6 million visitors). Definitive figures will be published in spring of 2018. – Tourism is big business around the world. In Spain, it is a €87 billion industry that accounts for about 12% of the country's gross domestic product.

Rubber Bullets Can Kill

The BBC has reported that rubber bullets are not as harmless as is widely believed. Researchers who studied victims have determined that 3% of those hit by rubber bullets died and that 16% suffered from permanent injuries such as blindness. Rubber-coated bullets, first developed in Great Britain against the Irish, are used all over the world as a form of crowd control. Supposedly non-lethal ammunition is also used in the U.S. For example, law enforcement has purchased thousands of rounds against pipeline protesters. All projectiles – whether coated with plastic or rubber, wood or wax – can cause serious injuries and death and should be phased out.

Bob Marley – International Superstar

Decades after his death, Bob Marley's reputation is undiminished. The singer and songwriter from Jamaica (1945-1981) has achieved unprecedented popularity. "There isn't a crevice of the world where Bob Marley isn't a god," says Larry Mestel from Primary Wave. Why that instant name-and-dreadlock recognition and cult status? Bob Marley was certainly a genuine artist who easily transcended national boundaries. Even people who care little about pop-and-rock music are entranced by his enchanting tunes and rhythms. He was also an ethnically and culturally mixed person with whom almost the entire world could identify – blacks and whites, Asians and Americans, people in the ghetto and indigenous communities. Perhaps most importantly, he had a political and spiritual message. He was not merely an entertainer out for fame and money. He was a freedom fighter committed to making the world a better place – free of hatred and war, racism and oppression. Those are timeless and universal values, and they may be the main reason why Bob Marley has achieved immortality.

[2/1/18]