



Community Matters

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

April 2018
Vol. 3, no. 10

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

Disclaimer: This newsletter is independently produced and financed. Both paper copies and electronic copies are available. Subscription is free. Past issues are archived on the website of Sustainable Delaware Ohio. While the publication uses a wide variety of sources, it does not necessarily reflect the policies and views of Sustainable Delaware Ohio, Ohio Wesleyan University, the City of Delaware, or any other entity. Also – while we strive for accuracy, please note that dates can change and events be cancelled. Please attempt to verify details before attending an event.

CALENDAR OF LOCAL EVENTS



Miller's Country Gardens Open (4/2)

Miller's Country Gardens at 2488 State Rt. 37 W. is opening for the season Mon., April 2. Farmer Dale has many new & exciting varieties of flowers and vegetables. The family-owned farm also offers fresh fruits & vegetables, cookies & pies, jams & jellies, and many other things that you can buy in bulk. They also carry top soil, mulches & fertilizers. Visit www.millerscountrygardens.com for more info.

OWU Lecture on Gender Issues (4/2)

Renowned author, speaker, and activist Robyn Ochs will speak on gender, sexuality, and coalition-building on Mon., April 2 (7 pm) in the Bayley Room of Beeghly Library. She will explore non-binary, middle sexualities and discuss tools to deal with ignorance and biphobia. Free & open to the public.

OWU Lecture on the 14th Amendment (4/3)

Dr. Barbara Terzian presents "Notable and Notorious: Ohio and the 14th Amendment" on Tues., April 3 (7 pm) in the Benes Rooms of OWU's HWCC Campus Center. It took the 14th Amendment to protect free speech, religion, fair trials & equal employment opportunities. To celebrate the amendment's 150th birthday, Dr. Terzian, a civil rights attorney & historian, will explain its origins, its profound impact & Ohio's relationship to it – both notable and notorious. Her presentation represents OWU's 2018 Vogel Lecture. Free & open to the public.

Lecture on WW II Memorabilia (4/3)

The Delaware County Genealogical Society is sponsoring a presentation by military historian & collector Robert Croce, Jr. He will be talking about "World War II: A Collector's Story" on Tues., April 3 (7:30 pm) in the Community Room of the Main Library (84 E. Winter St.). Bob Croce has collected WW II items for over 25 years and displayed them in many venues. Free & open to the public.

50th Anniversary of Martin Luther King's Death (4/4)

Civil-rights leader and Nobel Prize recipient Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tenn. His murderer was James Earl Ray (1928-98), a follower of George Wallace's segregationist platform.

OWU Lecture on the Prehistoric Southwest (4/5)

Laurie Webster from the Univ. of Arizona will present an illustrated lecture entitled "Southwest Style: Clothing Diversity and Social Identities in the Prehistoric Southwest" on Thurs., April 5 (6:30 pm) in the Schimmel / Conrades Science Center (SCSC), Rm. 163. Dr. Webster oversees the Cedar Mesa Perishables Project, which studies clothing, baskets, and other objects. Sponsored by the Arts Dept. Free & open to the public.

OWU Lecture on Health Policy (4/5)

OWU alum David C. Colby '67, a noted health services & health service researcher, will discuss "Health Policy: Addressing the Challenges We Face" on Wed., April 4 (4:10 pm) in the Benes Rooms of OWU's HWCC Campus Center. Free & open to the public.

Asbury Organ Series (4/5)

Sally Casto will be the soloist on Thurs., April 5 (12:15-12:45 pm). Asbury UMC is located at 55 W. Lincoln Ave. Free & open to the public.

OWU Lecture on Martinique (4/6)

The Caribbean island of Martinique experienced a short-lived insurrection in 1870, led by 19-year-old seamstress Lumina Sophie dite Surprise (1848-1879). She is remembered as a symbol of freedom and women's rights. On Fri., April 6 (4:10-5 pm), guest lecturer Dr. Jacqueline Couli from the Univ. of Kentucky will speak in OWU's Merrick Hall #201 on this historical figure. Free & open to the public.

First Friday in April (4/6)

Celebrate spring downtown on Fri., April 6 (6-9 pm)! The theme is "Spring on Down," which is an opportunity to play Main Street Delaware's version of Bingo, "Spring-o." If you'd like to play "Spring-o," stop by the Main Street Delaware office (20 E. Winter St.), on First Friday & pick up your free game card. Then visit your favorite businesses, where each store you visit will stamp your Spring-o card. Get five stamps in a row in any direction, and you'll be entered into a raffle. Prizes include event tickets, deals from your favorite downtown stores, prime seating & more. As always, many stores and restaurants will stay open late.

Vernal Pool Monitoring (4/6) – \$

Stratford Ecological Center at 3083 Liberty Rd. is slated to host another vernal-pool monitoring event on Fri., April 6 (6:30 pm). Bring your flashlight and be prepared to get wet & dirty during a night hike. The cost is \$5 per family. – Vernal pools are temporary, seasonal bodies of water that form in fields and woods when the snow melts and when it rains in spring. During summer, they typically dry out. Arid periods ensure the absence of fish, which in turn allows frogs, toads, and salamanders to flourish. Many other species use these spring-time pools as well, incl. numerous fascinating insects. Ray Stewart, a retired

science teacher and officer for the Ohio Wetlands Association, recently said this about a vernal pool: "You could compare it to a coral reef in diversity, or a tropical jungle. (...) There's more diversity here than you'd find in the Serengeti." He is, of course, right. Vernal pools are underappreciated by many people and are often seen as a nuisance rather than the unique and precious wildlife habitat areas that they are. They deserve to be protected.

Sheep-Shearing Day at Gallant Farm (4/7)

Preservation Parks of Delaware County is holding a sheep-shearing day on Sat., April 7 (10 am) at Gallant Farm (2150 Buttermilk Hill Rd.). Come see the flock lose their winter fleece and participate in handspinning, knitting, weaving & dying wool. Free & open to the public (all ages). – See also Stratford's sheep-shearing day on 4/21.

12th District Candidates Debate (4/7)

Organized by Ohio United 4 America, there will be a 2-hour debate / forum to hear the candidates for Ohio's 12th Congressional District speak on Sat., April 7 (1 pm) at OWU's HWCC Campus Center. The debate will be moderated by Scott Light of WBNS-10TV. Free, but "Eventbrite" registration is requested.

"Daily Show" Correspondent Hasan Minhaj (4/7)

Indian-American comedian Hasan Minhaj will perform on the OWU Campus (Gray Chapel inside University Hall) on Sat., April 7 (7 pm). Minhaj will be leaving "The Daily Show" this summer to get his own weekly show on Netflix. His OWU presentation may contain mature content. General admission is \$5. Free for OWU students & employees with valid IDs. To learn more about Minhaj, visit www.hasanminhaj.com. Tickets are available from Eventbrite (www.eventbrite.com).

Chamber Orchestra Concert (4/10)

Conducted by Dr. Lucy Ginther, OWU's Chamber Orchestra will perform its spring concert on Tues., April 10 (8 pm) in Gray Chapel inside University Hall. On the program are works by Ludwig van Beethoven ("Egmont" Overture) & Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's beautiful "Sheherazade". Also included are shorter works by OWU faculty Dr. Jennifer Jolley ("Ferry Crossing") & OWU student Colin Pietron ("Call to Adventure") who will conduct his own senior project for full orchestra. Free & open to the public.

MTSO Discusses Disability (4/11-12)

MTSO is offering a 2-day workshop entitled "Building Community Bridges: Conversations on Disability" from April 11-12. Even among faith communities committed to social justice, issues around disability can be overlooked. The workshop features various lectures and break-out sessions. The cost is \$25 (free for MTSO students & staff). – The symposium does include one lecture that is free & open to the public, however. On Wed., April 11 (7 pm), Rev. William C. Gaventa, Chair of the National Collaborative on Faith & Disability, will speak on inclusive ministries. He is the author of a new book, "Disability and Spirituality: Recovering Wholeness." Copies will be available for purchase. MTSO is located at 3081 Columbus Pike (State Rt. 23 S). For more info, visit www.mtso.edu.

"Indivisible" Meets (4/11)

The April meeting of the local Indivisible chapter will be Wed., April 11 (7 pm) at the Liberty Community Center (207 London Rd.). Park in the back & use the rear entrance. Here is how the group describes itself: "Indivisible includes more than 3,800 local grassroots groups across the United States working to promote social justice, inclusion, sustainability, tolerance, fairness & and true democracy. We are residents of Delaware who want to build a better future for our community & our country."



Historical Sports Venues in Delaware Co. (4/11)

The April event of the Delaware County Historical Society is a presentation by local historian Brent Carson on "Sports Venues in Delaware County." His talk will be on Wed., April 11 (7 pm), at the Barn at Stratford, 2690 Stratford Rd. Free & open to the public, but please pre-register through Eventbrite for adequate seating. For more info, visit www.delawareohiohistory.org.

12th District Candidates Debate (4/12)

Join the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Delaware County for their Candidates Night Forum (12th District). The event will be held Thurs., April 12 (6:30-9 pm) at the Delaware Area Career Center (DACC), North Campus (1610 State Rt. 521). The time from 6:30-7 pm is reserved for meet & greet. The forum officially begins at 7 pm. Channel 6 will televise & moderate the event. For more info on the LWV, visit www.lwvdelawarecountyohio.org.

OWU Lecture on Business Ethics (4/12)

G. Scott McComb of Heartland Bank will discuss "Morality in Business" on Thurs., April 12 (7:30 pm) in the Benes Rooms of OWU's HWCC Campus Center. His talk represents the 2018 Heisler Ethics Lecture. Free & open to the public.

Northwest Neighborhood Association (4/12)

Delaware's Northwest Neighborhood Association (NNA) has its monthly meeting on Thurs., April 12 (7:30 pm), at the Andrews House (39 W. Winter St.). For more info on the NNA, visit www.delawareanna.org.

OWU Performs "Cabaret" (4/13-14, 20-22)

Directed by Dr. Edward Kahn, OWU performs the Tony-winning musical "Cabaret" on April 13-14 (8 pm), April 20-21 (8 pm), and April 22 (2-4 pm) on the Main Stage inside Chappellear Dramas Center, 45 Rowland Ave. "Cabaret" is set in 1930s-Germany at the time when the Nazis rose to power. The cast is comprised of 17 OWU students. Music direction is by Jason Hiester. The musical contains adult themes & content. Tickets are \$10; \$5 for senior citizens, OWU employees, and non-OWU students; and free for OWU students with valid IDs.

Sustainable Delaware Ohio Meets (4/14)

Sustainable Delaware Ohio (SDO) meets on the second Saturday of every month, usually in the Community Room of the Main Library (84 E. Winter St.). This month's meeting will take place Sat., April 14 (9-11 am). The meetings are open to the public, but only members are eligible to vote.

Citizens' Climate Lobby (4/14)

The Delaware Chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) meets on the second Saturday of each month. The next meeting is Sat., April 14 (12 pm) at First Presbyterian Church, 73 W. Winter St. CCL is fighting climate change by proposing legislation that would wean the nation off fossil fuels. Visit www.citizensclimatelobby.org for more info or send an email to the local chapter at delawareccl@gmail.com.



Ohioana Book Festival (4/14)

The 14th Ohioana Book Festival returns Sat., April 14 (10:30 am – 5 pm), and will be held inside the Sheraton Columbus at Capitol Square (75 E. State St.). 120 authors & illustrators will be in attendance. Children's & teen activities are available, and there will be food trucks. Free & open to the public. Visit www.ohioana.org for more info.

Olentangy Watershed Clean-Up (4/15)

Delaware's Watershed / Sustainability Coordinator Caroline Cicerchi has announced the date for the year's first watershed clean-up. It will be held Sun., April 15 (1-3 pm), on the OWU campus and in & around the Blue Limestone Park area, which includes the Delaware Run. Participants meet outside OWU's HCWW Campus Center near the water fountain on the JAYwalk. All equipment is provided. Please wear sturdy shoes (no flip-flops).

Piano & Violin Recital (4/15)

Pianist Dr. Tianshu Wang from Capital Univ. and violinist Wu Dan will perform a guest recital on Sun., April 15 (3:15 pm) in the Jemison Auditorium inside OWU's Sanborn Hall at 23 Elizabeth St. Free & open to the public. – At OWU, Dr. Wang will also teach a master class.

Yardwaste Collection Resumes (4/16)

Yardwaste collection resumes Mon., April 16. It is possible, however, that you will see the city collect yard-waste bags even before that day if the weather is nice. Biodegradable paper bags, 32-gallon containers, and bundles no longer than 4 feet & weighing less than 50 pounds are acceptable. The city provides the curbside service at no extra charge on the scheduled refuse days from mid-April through mid-December.

Taxes Due (4/17)

Local, state, and federal taxes are due Tues., Apr. 17. Tax day 2018 is when you file your 2017 taxes. Americans filing tax returns in spring 2018 will not feel the effects of the new tax law until 2019.

National School Walkout (4/20)

To commemorate the 19th anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting, there will be walkouts at OWU, at Hayes High School, and at Dempsey Middle School on Fri., Apr. 20 (10 am) at the intersection of S. Sandusky St. and the JAYwalk. There will also be hundreds and thousands of additional local, state, and national companion rallies against the epidemic of gun violence in the U.S. The two Columbine shooters chose April 20th because it is Hitler's birthday.



Llama & Sheep Shearing Day (4/21)

The second annual Llama & Sheep Shearing Day at Stratford Ecological Center (3083 Stratford Rd.) will be Sat., April 21 (10 am – 4 pm). There was tremendous interest in last year's event.

Bird Club: "Songs of the Dark-Eyed Junco" (4/23)

Zoology Professor Dr. Dustin G. Reichard will be decoding the ways in which the Dark-Eyed Junco communicates on Mon., April 23 (7 pm) at Deer Haven Park (4183 Liberty Rd.). The Delaware County Bird Club meets monthly. Free & open to the public.

Administrative Professionals Day (4/25)

Don't forget Administrative Professionals Day ("Secretary's Day") on Wed., April 25. The day highlights the important role of administrative personnel in all sectors of the economy. It is celebrated during Administrative Professionals Week, which is on the last full week of April.

Jason Tharp at Fundamentals (4/28)

Meet children's author & illustrator Jason Tharp at Fundamentals (25 W. Winter St.) on Sat., April 28 (11:30 am – 1 pm). Tharp grew up in Ohio and lives in Columbus with his wife Becky & kids, plus one extremely fat kitty. He is currently an adjunct instructor at the Columbus College of Art & Design. You will find more work on his website, www.wonderviljestudios.com.

Sun & Moon Poetry Festival (4/28)

April is National Poetry Month, and on Sat., April 28th (12-4 pm), the Sun & Moon Poetry Festival is coming to Stratford Ecological Center at 3083 Liberty Rd. The day will feature more than a dozen Ohio poets who celebrate nature through their art. Enjoy poetry hikes throughout the farm & forest. Admission is \$7 (free for kids under 12).

Other events in the Sun & Moon Poetry Festival include a reading at Perkins Observatory on Sat., April 28 (8-10 pm, \$10) and 4 poetry workshops on the morning of Sun., April 29 (8 am – 12 pm). The workshops are free & open to the public. For full details, prices & registration about all festival events go to www.fullcrescentpress.com.



Central Ohio Symphony (4/28) – \$

The Central Ohio Symphony is having a very special concert on Sat., April 28 (7:30 pm). After the performance of Giuseppe Verdi's "La forza del destino" and Peter I. Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Julia Fantasy-Overture," the Symphony will play Maurice Ravel's "Daphnis & Chloé" Suites No. 1 & 2. Astronomer & visual artist Dr. José Francisco Salgado will simultaneously show his "Moonrise" film from KV 265, an Ohio film premiere. "Moonrise" explores man's eternal fascination with Luna, Earth's only natural satellite. Following the character and tempo of the two suites from "Daphnis et Chloé," the film takes the audience on a journey through history & space. As it has for ages, the moon stands at the intersection of art & science, motivating scientists, guiding explorers, and inspiring artists & writers. The film features lunar images and time-lapse photography, historical illustrations, as well as NASA scientific visualization.

CITY OF DELAWARE

The City of Delaware in April

City Council meets Mon., Apr. 9 + 23. Additional meetings include the Public Works / Utilities Commission (Tues., Apr. 3, 6 or 7 pm [conflicting info]), the Civil Service Commission (Wed., Apr. 4, 3 pm), the Planning Commission (Wed., Apr. 4), the Sister City Advisory Board (Tues., Apr. 10, 6 pm), the Parking & Safety Commission (Mon., Apr. 16, 6 pm), the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (Tues., Apr. 17), the Airport Commission (Thurs., Apr. 19), the Shade Tree Commission (Tues., Apr. 24), the Finance Committee (Wed., Apr. 25, 4 pm), and the Historic Preservation Commission (Wed., Apr. 25). Meetings are held at 7 pm in City Hall (2nd floor) unless otherwise noted. Please be advised that meetings are routinely cancelled due to a lack of agenda items and/or quorum. Check the City's website (www.delawareohio.net) for updates. Recordings of all public City Hall meetings can be found on the City's website.

City Council Discusses Affordable Housing

At a work session on economic development on March 19, City Council started a focused discussion of affordable housing. Jim Russell, Executive VP of Pizzuti Companies, mentioned in his presentation that lack of affordable housing is often an impediment for businesses. If employees have to commute long distances because they cannot afford to buy or rent housing locally, they are disinclined to work in the community. Not only does manufacturing and the service-sector industry suffer, but in many cities and states even firefighters, nurses, police officers, and teachers find themselves priced out. Councilman Shafer expressed his view that "a more diverse housing stock" is a necessity. Councilman Hellinger mentioned cities where developers are mandated to set a certain percentage of housing aside as "affordable." Other solutions would include tax incentives, smaller houses, and higher density. The goal is, or should be, to make it easier for people to live near where they work. At the moment, some 80% of Delaware County and Delaware City residents leave the area

every day to work (and often to shop and eat) elsewhere. City Council did not take any "next steps" on March 19.

More affordable housing would help Delaware grow, in the view of the business community. Higher density would also be more environmentally friendly. Urban sprawl is not particularly environmentally friendly. Higher compactness would reduce infrastructure costs and cut down on transportation emissions, which account for 1/3 of the nation's carbon-dioxide pollution. Thirdly, it would be socially advantageous insofar as it reduces economic and racial divisions and reduce the growing problem of homelessness. The conversation about density is already in full view in states such as California. It is imperative for Delaware, too, to find a sustainable balance soon.

Public Hearing on Revitalization Efforts (April 9)

According to a legal note in the Delaware Gazette on March 30, the City of Delaware intends to submit an application or applications to the State of Ohio to access approximately \$40 million available under the Biennial Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Small Cities Program, a federally funded and state-administered program. According to the ad, the City is eligible for up to \$2 million to address local needs such as downtown and neighborhood revitalization projects. Low-and-moderate income (LMI) service areas stand to benefit most under the national program, which has a focus on infrastructure enhancements as well as the preservation and improvement of local housing stock for LMI residents. CDBG national objectives focus on LMI benefits and/or "elimination of slum and blight," which is defined as "demolition of unsafe structures" and/or "rehabilitation of housing and neighborhood facilities." The note states that the City "may consider funding requests from eligible community entities," so local groups should not hesitate to inquire about options. The City's deadline to submit its application or applications to the State of Ohio is June 15.

Two public hearings are required. The first one is scheduled for Mon., April 9 (4 pm) in Council Chambers, 1 S. Sandusky St., 2nd floor. The building is ADA-accessible.

In the past, Delaware's focus has been on demolition rather than rehabilitation efforts, a strategy that significantly reduced the availability of affordable housing in the community. Perhaps this is the beginning of a more balanced approach. If so, we wholeheartedly welcome this new enlightened thinking. Who might be opposed to this different approach? The building industry may take exception to aspects of the program. There may also be people who are opposed to more housing for LMI folks. However, there is no question that the community as a whole will benefit from this new focus on revitalization efforts.

The Central Ohio Housing Market

The demand for affordable housing is great, but in 2017 only 2,691 new homes were sold in Central Ohio, down from as many as 8,000 in 2002, 2003, and 2004. What gives? In a detailed study (3/11), the Columbus Dispatch provided the following answer: "Most buyers can't afford what the companies are building." The median price of a new home in Central Ohio is currently \$350,525, which is higher than in Austin, Charlotte, Raleigh, or Indianapolis. (Metrostudy placed the median price even higher, at \$377,900.)

The reasons for this are complex. The Building Industry Association (BIA) of Central Ohio and the builders (Pulte, Schottenstein, Fischer, etc.) are quick to blame the rising price of land, labor, and materials (especially lumber). They also say that the density regulations of many communities are too rigid and need to be softened. Our local community, Delaware, has already been squarely confronted with the issue of density in recent months.

However, another question altogether is whether companies are offering what consumers need and want. The BIA recently announced the location for the 2018 Parade of Homes. The price range starts at \$750,000 and goes up to "more than \$2 million." Not many people can afford places like this. The founder of Pulte Homes, William Pulte (1932-2018), just died. Influenced by assembly-line and factory-production techniques, he developed standardized layouts and built houses that were affordable to average people. It sounds like Pulte and other builders have since experienced considerable mission creep and have abandoned their commitment to ordinary Americans. Affordability remains a pressing issue across the nation and locally.

City Council Approves Del-Mor Dwellings Project

At the March 12 meeting, City Council unanimously approved the proposed Del-Mor Dwellings project at 250 Curtis St. For a while there was considerable controversy over the facility intended for individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities. However, after the developer lowered the number of units from 48 to 40 the tone began to shift. In addition, over the weeks and months dozens of people expressed the need for, and their support of, housing for this underserved segment of the population. Councilwoman Lisa Keller acknowledged that the process was an educational one that opened the eyes and hearts of many in the community. – We at "Community Matters" are proud that Delaware has come around and is now in support of such neighborhood facilities.

Planning Commission Rejects Willowbrook Farm

At its March meeting, the Planning Commission unanimously disapproved the request by MedRock Co. (Ronald Sabatino) to build a 180-unit apartment complex along S. Houk Dr., just north of the YMCA. During the public hearing, adjacent residents voiced concerns about traffic and density, among other things. One resident discussed what she described as Mr. Sabatino's long and sordid history of neglecting the upkeep of his multiple properties. Also, it did not exactly help that Mr. Sabatino has reportedly resorted to litigation against Councilwoman Lisa Keller in whose ward the proposed development is located. It seems foolish to sue an elected member of City Council who will sooner or later decide whether or not the project gets approved. Should City Council also deny his request, he may sue the City of Delaware as well. That's the kind of person he is, with lots of court experience under his belt and a lawyer on his side wherever he goes. During the public hearing one person stated that he is "a bully" who runs his businesses and treats his tenants on fear and intimidation. He seems to be a man who tends to burn bridges instead of building them. Do we want someone in our city who is widely perceived to be a bad neighbor? Decidedly not. If you can, please support Lisa Keller, the Planning Commission, and City Council.

At the same meeting, Planning Director David Efland also stated that several additional potentially "controversial cases" may soon come down the pipeline. In fact, the Planning Commission is looking at meeting twice a month now because of the increased caseload.

More on the Willowbrook Farm Project

City Council experienced an unprecedented spectacle on March 26. Medrock developer Ronald Sabatino sent in a 3-person team to aggressively advocate for the 180-unit Willowbrook Farm development project on S. Houk Rd., just north of the YMCA. The group included newly retained attorney Jeffrey M. Lewis from Columbus, Ohio (1650 Lake Shore Dr., Ste. 150). His website refers to him as a pre-eminent, world-class lawyer. Undoubtedly, his legal services are equally expensive. Ron Sabatino is reportedly already suing elected Councilwoman Lisa Keller for doing her job, speaking her mind, and asking critical questions. Lewis came in very heavy-handed and brazenly requested that Lisa Keller voluntarily recuse herself or be forcibly disqualified. He also demanded that any resident signed up to speak at the public hearing provide sworn testimony as a "witness" and be cross-examined. Mayor Carolyn Kay Riggle reminded Mr. Lewis that this was a public hearing, not a court-room trial, and that she would not tolerate any attempt to intimidate the residents of the city. Clearly, the intent of the Sabatino / Lewis team was to coerce critics of the development project into silence by threatening them with potential lawsuits. They seem poised to use the same tactic against the City of Delaware. The message was unmistakable. While perhaps lawful, this kind of bullying is behavior that is profoundly offensive and morally reprehensible.

Sadly, this is a legal minefield, so it's best to refrain from subjective opinions and stick to documented facts that are in the public domain. The fact is that Mr. Sabatino is a landlord against whose T&P Properties numerous serious grievances have been voiced over the years. Some of the complaints can be found on the website of the Better Business Bureau (BBB), a reputable site. There is a convincing preponderance of evidence that what people have been saying about Mr. Sabatino at the February and March meetings of the Planning Commission is indeed true. He does not seem to be someone who has

the best interest of local communities in mind. Obviously, City Council must tread very carefully given the predicament it is in.

Council did not vote the project up or down on March 26. The third and perhaps final reading will be on Mon., April 9 (7 pm).

City Council Approves Beer Sales at Golf Course

On March 26, City Council voted to permit the sale of alcohol at the clubhouse of the 12-hole Hidden Valley Golf Course that is owned and operated by the City of Delaware. Councilmember George Hellinger voted against the measure. Additional revenues of \$5,000 to \$8,000 are expected annually and will help keep the golf course financially sustainable. Plenty of beer is already consumed at the golf course, and so the ordinance does not change any actual practice.

Sims Brothers End Recycling

At the March 26 meeting of City Council, City Manager Tom Homan reported that Sims Brothers in Delaware and Marion have informed the City that they are leaving the recycling business and will not serve the City anymore. Recycling is no longer profitable after China closed its borders to second-hand American products at the beginning of the year. Homan acknowledged that residents value the recycling services the City of Delaware provides and said he is exploring alternative solutions.

China had recycled about half of the globe's plastics and paper products prior to 2018, but it decided not to be "the world's garbage dump" anymore. As a result, recycled materials are increasingly being stockpiled or landfilled in the West. Recycling and sustainability are not priorities in the Trump administration, and so the urgent problem remains largely unaddressed and unresolved. State and federal solutions are urgently needed.

Our assumption is that Sims Brothers (and Friction Metals) will continue to accept metal products because there is a demand for them in the U.S., but at this point specifics are not available.



Delaware's "Can Opener"

In 2015 someone complained, "for decades the Gazette has reported on 'the Can Opener' and still nothing has been accomplished but lip service about the problem." The same remained true for the years since then. On March 5, the low CSX railroad bridge over W. Central Ave. claimed another victim, badly damaging a semi-truck from Canada (see above). The severity of the latest crash led to several hours of traffic restrictions on the busy route. Another accident has happened since. The City now says it plans to install an advanced, laser-guided warning system for overheight vehicles during the 2nd quarter of 2018, as soon as the custom poles are delivered. The new system will not eliminate the incidents altogether, but it is estimated that it will reduce their number by 65%. The City received \$215,000 in ODOT funding for the project.



More "Progress" Coming to Delaware?

Unconfirmed reports indicate that the person or persons who purchased the building at 235 W. William St. (the former Hiram Perkins House or Peace & Justice SLU) from Ohio Wesleyan for \$170,000 is also in process of acquiring several other adjacent properties to the west. The plan is to demolish the old building and to build a 65-unit hotel and parking lot with an entrance at Oak Hill Ave. The City last

month confirmed that there have been exploratory discussions about a potential hotel in or near Downtown Delaware, and that some of those discussions were "ongoing." It is obvious that OWU is playing an integral role in these deliberations as it will be one of the beneficiaries of the planned hotel. It is possible, of course, that the negotiations will not amount to anything. However, either way it seems clear that the days of the beautiful and unique old structure at 235 W. William St. (west of the old observatory) are numbered. It does not appear to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and it is outside the jurisdiction of Delaware's Historic Preservation Commission. It has been neglected for many years ("demolition by neglect") and sat completely empty and abandoned for the past 6 months. It is easy to "prove" that it would be cost-prohibitive to restore it. So, snap a picture before it is too late and the building joins the many other old structures in Delaware that have entered the void. This is a race to the bottom: will the old jail or OWU's old Peace & Justice House be the first to go? Or might it be Austin Manor, another building on the National Register of Historic Places? Delaware seems to have been afflicted by a bad demolition fever.

Here are a few additional thoughts about what might be a potentially flawed process. No rational developer would invest \$170,000 (plus significant demolition costs) in a project unless there was some assurance that the property would be rezoned and the project (a hotel in this case) approved. It sounds as if somewhere along the line secret deliberations were held, an agreement forged, preliminary decisions made, guarantees provided, and perhaps tax incentives approved – none of which happened in public meetings. The process is opaque, not transparent. The State of Ohio recently informed Columbus City Schools that their process for selecting the new superintendent was in violation of Ohio's Open Meeting Act, which requires all official decisions be made in public meetings instead in backroom deals. Columbus' hiring decision may therefore be null and void "ab initio." The City of Delaware should also do a better job avoiding the perception that sometimes decisive action is taken behind closed doors and that the meetings of the Planning Commission and City Council are but rubberstamping charades without meaningful discussion. It is true that the Planning Commission and City Council provide the final & official stamp of approval to technically meet the letter of the ORC, but it is clear that all essential details are worked out ahead of time.



"Eyes of Freedom" May Come to Delaware

Plans are underway to bring the Lima Company Memorial, "Eyes of Freedom," to Delaware at the end of May or beginning of June. It is a travelling show of a series of life-size oil paintings to honor the fallen Marines of Columbus-based Lima Company 3/25, one of the hardest hit units in Operation Iraqi Freedom (2005). 23 men, 17 from Ohio, made the ultimate sacrifice. Mayor Carolyn Kay Riggle announced at the March 12 meeting of City Council that the venue is likely to be Veterans Park, between the YMCA and the National Guard on S. Houk Rd. The artist of "Eyes of Freedom" is Anita Miller, at that time a Columbus resident. She spent more than two years tracking down photographs and creating the portraits, often in cooperation with the families of the fallen. Mike Strahle and his team are the people who travel the country in a full-size semi-truck. (Let's hope it won't get stuck under the "Can Opener." ☺) For more info, visit www.limacompanymemorial.org.

This entry would be incomplete without noting that 15 years ago the U.S. careered into the Iraq adventure without fully knowing what it was up against. Much like today, the administration back then (Bush, Cheney & Rumsfeld) lived in an echo chamber that blinded it to facts, evidence, and reality. There were no "weapons of mass destruction," for instance. Some 4,400 American soldiers fought and died honorably in the war, among them the heroes of Lima Company.

The financial cost to the U.S. topped \$3 trillion, or about \$24,000 per household. America lost much blood and treasure to satisfy the thirst of a few hubristic leaders. We are not friends of the Koch Brothers, but they are right when they say that America squanders trillions abroad "while needs at home are neglected."

Tree City Delaware

The City of Delaware has been named a Tree City USA community for the 37th consecutive year by the National Arbor Foundation in honor of its commitment to urban-forest management. In granting Tree City status, the National Arbor Day Foundation noted the work of the Shade Tree Commission as well as Delaware's Arbor Day observance. Delaware has an urban forest of more than 17,000 trees valued at more than \$17 million. These trees provide shade, reduce pollution, absorb storm water runoff, quiet urban noise & provide habitat for birds. National Arbor Day is April 27. The City of Delaware's Shade Tree Commission will mark the occasion Sat. morning, April 28 (10 am), with a ceremonial tree planting at the YMCA (1121 S. Houk Rd.) during Health Kids Day (8:30-11:30 am).

Asian "Massage Parlor" in Delaware

"New Life Asian Massage" at 2211 State Rt. 23 N. has been open for about a year now. Its website (www.newlifeasianmassage.com) seems legit. It says, "With years of experience massaging in spa and chiropractic settings, we have developed a versatile skill set with a wide range of practical knowledge. We are experts in relaxation massage, deep tissue massage and neuromuscular techniques. The spa room offers a quiet, tranquil environment. We offer: deep tissue, back walking, hot stone, pain & stress relief relaxation." Nearby residents, however, have seen evidence that the massage parlor might not be a legitimate business. They suspect sexual activity and human trafficking going on at the cash-only place. On Craigslist, the parlor reportedly advertises "girls, girls, new girls," not relaxing massages. One online ad promises: "Beautiful & Sweet Young Asian Girls Are Ready to Give You BEST Massage." Some of the ads include images of half-naked and/or well-endowed girls with big, soulful eyes in sexually suggestive poses. At least one customer wrote in an online review that s/he did not receive "a professional massage" at all and wondered how the place stays open without the presence of licensed or registered massage therapists. Residents predicted that Delaware's new Speedway truck refueling station next door would attract shady lion's dens and highway "johns." We agree that the establishment does not meet the sniff test and should be investigated and, if necessary, shut down. Despite countless messages to police, the sheriff, and City staff so far nothing has happened, however. The public perception is that local authorities have shown little interest. The parlor remains as open as ever, a nice gateway amenity welcoming visitors to the sweet charms of the city...

Update: On 3/23, Craigslist has taken its personals section offline in the U.S. after the U.S. Senate overwhelmingly passed an anti-sex trafficking bill that holds websites responsible for illegal activity. Websites that are essentially sex-trafficking marketplaces (e.g., Backpage.com) can now be sued. President Trump has indicated that he will sign it. As of 3/30, however, New Life Asian Massage remains open.

"We Want Change Now"

To commemorate the 17 victims of the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, a brief national walkout occurred on March 14. Hayes High School was among the hundreds and thousands of participating schools. Principal Richard Stranges supported the students as long as they remained peaceful and indicated that there would be no disciplinary action for missing class.

In addition, Hayes High School students sent a letter to Ohio's two senators, written by Adryán Rojas, a junior. Many Delaware residents may know him as a promising violinist who has performed with the Central Ohio Symphony. Below is a copy of the short letter, which was signed by about 150 students.

***"Dear Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown:
We the students of Rutherford B. Hayes High School
in Delaware, Ohio, are writing to urge you to support***

common-sense gun laws to reduce gun violence in the United States. One of the first steps toward this goal would be supporting more detailed background checks. Background checks are supported by over 90% of all Americans and are a common-sense tool for keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and the dangerously mentally ill. Background checks on gun sales are the most effective way to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people and help save lives.

In 1994, there was a nationwide ban on assault-style weapons, but it expired in 2004. As students and future voters we want a new ban on assault-style weapons such as AR-15s and other similar rifles. There is no need for that style of weapon to be in stores or in the hands of the American people. We want change now. We are aware that Mr. Portman has accepted over three million dollars from the NRA. While they may be in your pocketbook, we are the new voters of Ohio and we will vote for our future and safety.

Enough is enough. It's time to end the epidemic of gun violence in our country. Thank you for doing what is right for the people of Ohio and the United States."

Unfortunately, not everybody agrees with the students and their perfectly legitimate concern for physical safety. More than one national pundit suggested that teachers had brainwashed & indoctrinated their students and "ordered" them to participate in the rally. Locally, a person was convinced the kids were "puppets for communist Marxist Obama Soros groups." We at Community Matters do not think that calling future taxpayers, voters, and neighbors "immature" and "stupid" is the way to go. We commend the Hayes High School students for their exemplary civic action.



Hayes H.S. Students Visit Lahardane, Ireland

More than 50 Hayes H.S. students visited Ireland for a week in March. They spent most of the trip in the northwestern Irish village of Lahardane, best known for its Naphin Whiskey. There they stayed with host families and participated in the local St. Patrick's Day parade. Chaperone Dr. Adonis Bolden, Assistant Principal at Hayes H.S., said the trip was beneficial because it gave students a chance to experience a different culture, learn new things, and create lifelong memories. There is a chance that Lahardane might become the 4th sister city of Delaware after Omutninsk (Russia), Baumholder (Germany), and Sakata (Japan).

OWU Announces Commencement Speaker

The speaker at OWU's 174th commencement ceremony on Sat., May 12 (1 pm) will be Dr. Paul R. Schimmel '62. The title of his talk is "The Only Way to Be a Great Dancer." Schimmel has had an illustrious career as a scientist working on decoding genetic information and on the human genome project. He has published hundreds of research papers and holds a portfolio of patents. OWU's Schimmel-Conrades science Center is named after him.

OWU Selects New Food Vendor

After a thorough process, OWU has selected a new food vendor for its dining halls – AVI Foodsystems (www.avifoodsystems.com). It is America's largest independently owned-and-operated food and hospitality provider. OWU will transition from Chartwells to AVI Foodsystems beginning May 14. The new company will have a focus on sustainability and use more locally sourced ingredients as well as fresh, made-from-scratch meals. A couple of venues will offer expanded operating hours, others will be refurbished. Smith Hall which will become a 24/7 facility. Next year,

Merrick Café will be converted to a fully licensed Starbucks. Many colleges and universities use AVI Foodsystems, incl. Kenyon and Wofford College, and the reviews have been positive. The company was founded in 1960 and has its headquarters in Warren, Ohio.

OWU Students Rally against Gun Violence

A crowd of OWU students, faculty & staff assembled on Fri., March 23, inside HWCC Campus Center to protest against the epidemic of gun violence in the U.S. The frequency of mass shootings at K-12 schools, colleges & universities has increased, and young people are sick & tired of having to live in perpetual fear. Minorities, in particular, are disproportionately affected by gun violence. The ubiquity of police shootings was also mentioned as was the fact that the NRA appears "to own" America. How is it that other countries do not have this problem despite the fact that they too have people with mental-health issues? Has it perhaps something to do with the fact that the U.S. has 5% of the world's population, but owns 50% of the world's firearms, as someone noted? This is "not a political issue," speakers emphasized, but instead "a human issue." One faculty member asked, "When will this end?"

Some OWU students were going to leave for a march in D.C. afterwards, and a state-wide rally was scheduled to take place in Columbus the next day. OWU Chaplain Jon Powers sent the students off with his blessing. He encouraged students "to love deeply" and "seek truth boldly." He expressed his hope that the young generation would remain filled with enough foolishness to believe that they can change the world when everybody else says it couldn't be done. The impossible can indeed be accomplished if one's conviction is strong enough.



OWU Chaplain Jon Powers Inducted

OWU Chaplain Jon Powers will be inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, on April 5, the day after the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Morehouse Alumnus Martin Luther King Jr. '48, which is the focal point of this year's 33rd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. College of Ministers and Laity at Morehouse College. Chaplain Powers was selected for this honor by Morehouse College President David S. Thomas and the Rev. Dr. Lawrence Carter, who is Dean of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Chapel, Director of the Martin Luther King Jr. College of Pastoral Leadership, and Chair of the Howard Thurman Educational Trust. According to the announcement, the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers into which Chaplain Powers will be inducted "is comprised of ordained clergy from the Christian tradition as well as faith leaders from a wide array of global spiritual and ethical traditions (rabbis, imams, priests & ministers). These diverse individuals have exhibited a commitment and promise for using their religious positions of leadership to promote peace, tolerance, interfaith understanding, healing, reconciliation, nonviolence, moral cosmopolitan social progress, agapic [love] justice & care for the ecosystem."

OWU Faculty Approves Free Speech Statement

Colleges & universities across the nation are routinely accused by conservatives that they stifle free speech. This is decidedly not the case. The First Amendment is alive and well at the overwhelming majority institutions of higher education. (There are some religious schools where censorship is practiced, however.) OWU has now joined the ranks of institutions of higher education that have expressly issued robust free-speech principles and policies. A task force has drafted a statement that was presented to the faculty in March as a recommendation and is likely to be approved in April. Before it is ratified, however, it will also have to be vetted and approved by the students and the board of trustees. The document is now in the public realm and can be shared with the broader

community. The key portions of the text are below, and they are closely aligned with OWU's 175-year-old vision, mission, and values. The school has embraced liberal principles and "the free pursuit of truth" from the start.

"Academic freedom is the right of all members of Ohio Wesleyan to exercise the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, learn, and challenge, whether it is a scholarly argument, political position, personal opinion, or University policy. Academic freedom relates to political, historical, cultural, social, religious, artistic, and scientific inquiry in all educational activities, including research, publication, and presentation. It also applies in all educational venues, including the classroom, laboratory, studio, podium, stage, and library.

Academic freedom pertains to ideas that many or most members of Ohio Wesleyan may consider mistaken, dangerous, and even despicable. Certain opinions may cause emotional distress and have an inequitable impact on different groups or individuals. Yet it is not the proper role of the University to shield them from views they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or offensive. Ohio Wesleyan values the rights, perspectives, and voices of all members of the University community. Faculty, students, administrators, and staff also share the collective responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect and civility. Nevertheless, concerns about mutual respect and civility should never be used as a justification for limiting or suppressing discussion of ideas, however unwelcome, disagreeable, or offensive those ideas may be to some individuals.

Academic freedom does not, of course, mean that members of the University may say whatever they wish, whenever or wherever they wish. Ohio Wesleyan may restrict expression that violates the law, defames specific individuals, constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, or unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests. In addition, the University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt ordinary activities. These limitations, however, are narrow exceptions; it is critically important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the University's commitment to a free expression of ideas.

The entire Ohio Wesleyan community must also act in accordance with the fundamental principle of free expression. Although members may criticize and protest the views expressed by faculty, administrators, students, or speakers invited to campus, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to present ideas that they reject or even loathe. The University has a responsibility to promote debate and deliberation of contentious issues – and to protect that freedom if some individuals seek to prevent it."

OWU Community Film Series

The "Community Film Series" continues with "The Salesman" (Apr. 3-4), "The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros" (Apr. 10-11), "Boy" (Apr. 17-18), and "Tiny Furniture" (Apr. 24-25). The films are shown at the Strand Theatre (28 E. Winter St.) on Tues. at 9:30 pm and on Wednesdays at 7:30 pm. Admission is \$7, OWU students pay \$6, seniors \$5.

Comparative Literature Film Festival 2018

Multiple additional film festivals took place at OWU this spring. The remaining titles of the Comparative Literature (CMLT) Film Festival are: "The Syrian Bride" (Mon., April 2), "Before the Leaves Fall" (Mon., Apr. 9), and "The Sacrifice" (Mon., Apr. 16). The international movies are shown at 5 pm in the Benes Rooms of HWCC Campus Center. Free & open to the public.



Chase Iron Eyes Speaks at OWU

Native-American activist, lawyer, and politicians Chase Iron Eyes spoke on the OWU campus on Fri., March 3. He discussed his

upbringing at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, the ongoing problems that Native-Americans face living on the "rez," and the conflict involving the Dakota Access oil pipeline. Iron Eyes is still a relatively young man, having received his law degree from the Univ. of Denver in 2007. He and his wife, Dr. Sara Jumping Eagle (a physician), have several children who still live at home.

It was illuminating to hear Iron Eyes discuss the ancient belief system of his Lakota (Sioux) tribe. He is a deeply spiritual person for whom the earth is his mother. The native land is sacred and must be protected against corporations wanting to exploit and pollute it. Iron eyes questioned the conventional meaning of "homeland security" and "terrorists." The Dept. of Homeland Security should help those patriots who attempt to protect the purity and sanctity of the land, the living ecosystems, and the water resources. Instead, the agency sides with those who defile and destroy sacred sites and views the water protectors as "criminals" and "terrorists" when they dare to raise concerns. Iron Eyes reported that so far a total of 843 people have been arrested after construction of the pipeline began, incl. his wife. He, too, is facing an upcoming trial (Aug. 3) that could put him in prison for up to 6 years – simply for speaking out on Facebook against injustice and for freedom of religion. America does not realize it – but there are countless political prisoners in the system. Not only are (the white) authorities and corporate investors actively engaged in conquering and subjugating the indigenous population, they also practice what Iron Eyes called "the colonization of the mind." The wholesale eradication of Native-American languages, cultures & identities is a time-honored practice in U.S. history. The oppression continues to this day. The poverty on his reservation (as well as on other Indian reservations) is a deliberate "act of violence," according to Iron Eyes, designed to keep Native Americans without a voice and a vote.

It is perfectly understandable why the speaker was profoundly skeptical of a power structure that keeps Native-Americans and other minorities down and out. The criminal-justice system is complicit in the oppression as is what he referred to as "scientific supremacy." Research is often conducted on behalf of commercial interests and against divine law. However, he says, science is not supreme. There are mythical and cosmological forces that are far older than the Enlightenment and modern science. We would all benefit from abandoning our secularized view of the world and unearthing the timeless and universal values that have defined us as human beings from the beginning. "Indigeneity" (indigenously) is something that all people have a capacity and indeed a longing for. We should practice less fealty to modernity and, instead, rediscover our roots and divine consciousness. Obviously, for Iron Eyes mythological knowledge and political activism are not binary opposites. It is precisely the discovery and study of man's divine origins that has compelled him to become an activist in the first place.

For those interested in learning more about the ancient teaching & wisdom of Native Americans, Iron Eyes recommended the book "Sons of the Wind," which presents the mythology and sacred spirits of the Lakota. Based on information given to Dr. James Walker a century ago by Lakota Holy Men, this classic compilation includes the cycle of creation, the appearance of spirits & animals, the making of the four directions, and the coming of the Real People. You might also want to check out his website, "Last Real Indians" (<http://lastrealindians.com>). He is also on Facebook, and several videos are available on YouTube.

Chase Iron Eyes is not the only OWU speaker who has lately stated that we seem to live in an eschatological or apocalyptic end-of-time age of truth-telling, reckoning, and catharsis. On March 1, theologian Dr. Carol A. Newsom presented a talk about climate change which envisioned a world in which humans have gone extinct. The sense is growing that human civilization is on the road to ruin. The current national conversation about reasonable gun-control measures also seems to suggest that the crisis has become so debilitating and existential that many see the need for a new beginning. Our future may well lie in the rediscovery of the past.



The End of a Cottonwood

An old friend passed away during Ohio Wesleyan's spring break – the majestic Eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) southwest of Merrick Hall (see picture). She is gone now, but in old pictures the tree plays a prominent role. You can see her slowly grow, mature, and decline. She was as old as Merrick Hall itself, almost 150 years (we counted the rings before stump removal), but in recent years she has shown signs of stress and weakness. When Merrick Hall was renovated, heavy machinery was parked there, causing additional deterioration due to soil compaction. In a storm last year, she lost many limbs and her massive crown began to look bare. It hardly produced any seedpods anymore, and the ground underneath it was no longer covered with white cotton-like seed fluffs in late May or early June. (Like ginkgo trees, cottonwoods are unisexual and produce either seeds or pollen.) A determination was made, with the help of City Arborist Doug Richmond, to remove her for safety reasons. The crows and squirrels will have to find other trees to do their business, but luckily there is no shortage of them within OWU's Jane Decker Arboretum. Dozens of new trees are being planted every year, and many of them will one day be as magnificent-looking as the Eastern cottonwood that is now gone forever.



Kevin J. Crowley (1956-2018)

Kevin Crowley, Executive Director of Delaware County's People in Need (PIN), unexpectedly died of a heart attack at the age of 61 on Sat., March 17, at his farm in Morrow County. Crowley was the foundation behind PIN and a tireless advocate for county and city residents of limited means. People who knew him described him as a kind, caring, and generous man with a heart of gold. He personally intervened in countless eviction cases and was successful in more than 90% of them. He was a true friend to all in need and will be sorely missed. A Kevin James Crowley Memorial Fund has been created to support PIN. Randy Bournique is replacing Crowley as Executive Director.

Aim Media Midwest

The "Delaware Gazette" was taken over by Aim Media in 2017. How has the paper fared since then? Is it meeting expectations? The website of Aim Media LLC says that each paper of the conglomerate will provide "comprehensive" coverage of local news. However, the number of reporters is limited, preventing the paper from covering local news in a thorough and comprehensive manner. The website also talks of "watchdog journalism." The Delaware Gazette functions more as a harmless lapdog, not an aggressive watchdog. Investigative journalism is not its thing. Instead, it relies heavily on press releases and submitted stories. Again, this is, in part, a function of not having enough boots on the ground. The website also says that papers owned and operated by Aim Media are "setting the civic agenda." The Delaware Gazette is by and large not a community leader, it is a follower. As far as "balance" is concerned, conservative voices used to be given a prominent perch. We commend the current editor, Joshua Keeran, for running more objective, factual, evidence-based, and informational op-ed pieces instead of the substance-free ideological rantings of the past.

Let's hope Joshua Keeran will stay for a while and have a positive impact. Print media are struggling across the nation, but the need and hunger for reliable and relevant information has not diminished. The Delaware Gazette does have an important role to play in the community.



Arena Fair Theatre

The Arena Fair Theatre has announced that its 2018 summer production will be "Big River: The Musical Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." The lyrics & music for the award-winning Broadway musical were written by Roger Miller. The theater company has also announced that it has teamed up with the local YMCA to offer stagecraft and auditioning classes for community members of all ages. Classes start in April!

The Delaware Community Concert Band

Do you love making music, but are not a professional musician with a degree? The Delaware Community Concert Band (DCCB) is an active and growing local instrumental group that welcomes anyone who can read music and play a musical instrument. All ages and skill levels are welcome, and there are no auditions. The amateur musicians play for their own fulfillment, fellowship, and enjoyment. Performances take place throughout the year at various public events within the City of Delaware and Delaware County. The organization promotes awareness, education, and appreciation of music.

DCCB meets Thursday nights 7-9 pm in the Instrumental Music Room at Dempsey Middle School (599 Pennsylvania Ave.). Musicians need to bring their own instruments, although some percussion pieces are available. For more info, contact the artistic director, music teacher Anne Brandyberrry, at annebrandyberrry@yahoo.com or 740-362-0045. DCCB is also on Facebook; you can see and hear them perform there. In addition, there is at least one older video of them on YouTube where they play a "Star Wars" tune. Should you want to join the group, the annual dues are only \$10.

Honey & Abernathy at 32 Spring St.

On March 20, the local Honey & Abernathy store, formerly at 38 S. Sandusky St., has opened a new and much roomier stand-alone store at 32 Spring St., not far from the corner of S. Sandusky St. It features an eclectic mix of many unique and diverse items – honey products, teas, baskets, bath-and-body items, textiles, candles, textiles, jewelry, books, posters, office supplies, stationary, house plants, and so on. There are artistically inspired high-quality products for everybody. All items are "harvested & homespun," natural and/or organic, hand-crafted and/or artisanal, and sustainable. Some items are sourced locally. The inventory will change frequently as new items come in. In addition, there will be various regular classes and workshops on Wed. and Thurs. nights. They will be taught in the back of the building. For example, "Kick Ass and a Glass" (a self-defense course) will be taught by Julie Loeffler. (The next one is on April 18.) Additional classes include yoga with Colleen Byers and SuSilk techniques. Owner Mel Clark says she is exploring the possibility of adding more arts-and-crafts courses at a later point. The store's current hours are M/T/W 11-6 and R/F/S 11-8; closed Sundays. Honey & Abernathy has a website and is on Facebook.

A New Concert Venue in Delaware

Endangered Species, the record store at 11 W. Winter St., has announced that it plans to start organizing concerts in the large hall underneath the store, which is owned by the Knights of Pythias at 9 W. Winter St. The ballroom has about 100 seats, with a maximum capacity of about 250. The Facebook announcement by owner Patrick Bailey stated that variety is the goal while "leaning toward Prog Rock, Jazz, Fusion, and some great tribute bands, too. And International

'World' music as well." Tickets will be cheap (\$5 -20), and alcohol will not be served, so the shows will be open for all ages. The first concerts may take place as early as April or May. During the soft opening of "Pat's Cave," the Charlie Foxtrot Quintet, a swing band, will play on Sat., April 28. District 97, a progressive-rock band, will perform Fri., May 11.

Delaware City Vineyard Church

Delaware City Vineyard (DCV) Church at 32 Troy Rd. (the former CVS building across from Grady Hospital) is working hard to build community "in the city, for the city." Stephanie Gregory-Meyer, president of Sustainable Delaware Ohio, has informed "Community Matters" that DCV is now hoping to build a tool-lending library in the foreseeable future. For a small fee, people will be able to check out tools and equipment for home projects. However, for the project to go forward volunteers and donated tools are needed. The church, led by the pastoral team of Robb & Julie Morgan, is affiliated with the Delaware County Hunger Alliance and already has community meals on the 2nd & 4th Monday of each month (6-8 pm) as well as a food pantry.



Earlier this year, Stratford Ecological Center installed 44 solar panels on its animal barn. The tool & equipment barn in the background has since also been equipped with solar panels. As a result, the Center's \$9,000 annual electricity bill will go down to a few hundred dollars.

Interested in Solar?

Solar panels typically have a warranty of 25 years, but normally last decades after they have paid for themselves because they are durable and require little or no maintenance. Solar also adds to the resale value of your home. If you are looking for honest and trustworthy advice about installing solar panels, give David Carpenter from "Delaware County Solar" a call at 740-815-8734 or contact him at delawarecountysolar@gmail.com. David, a retired high school teacher of physics, has had solar panels on his own house at Executive Blvd. for more than a decade and has worked as a private consultant for a number of years. He is a member of Sustainable Delaware Ohio (SDO) and a passionate advocate for solar energy. He is responsible for much of the solarization that's happening in Delaware County and the City of Delaware.

DELAWARE COUNTY & CENTRAL OHIO



John Russell for Congress

Galena farmer John Russell is a Democratic candidate for Ohio's 12th District, once held by Pat Tiberi. True to his word of wanting to run a grassroots campaign, he has been spending considerable time in local communities. You don't see or hear much from other candidates, but John is different. Committed to working people and other ordinary folks (he is a working man himself), he has sworn off corporate money. The topic of campaign finance reform

enjoys a high priority on his website. He is fighting to protect affordable healthcare. At a March 10 meeting in Delaware he also stated that Trump's trade tariffs are misguided because inevitably other countries will impose tariffs on American products in response, leading to fewer exports and less production in agriculture & manufacturing. His campaign literature notes that Russell also wants to invest in much-needed infrastructure improvements and boost the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. The Delaware County Young Democrats endorsed him in March. To learn more about Russell, visit www.johnrussellforohio.com. He is also on Facebook & Twitter.

John Russell Issues Statement on Climate Change

In March, John Russell issued the following statement on climate change:

- 1. Climate change is the greatest challenge the human race will face in our time.*
- 2. We can put a price on pollution and refund the proceeds to American households. Such a system could reduce carbon emissions to 50% of 1990 levels while adding 2.8 million jobs to the American economy.*
- 3. We can be a district that produces solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicles. By doing so, we will reduce the demand for natural gas and be able to close fracking injection sites that have caused environmental disasters across the state and country.*
- 4. This is a bipartisan issue and these policies have vast public approval. Now we just need the political courage to push for legislation that the fossil fuel industry has been fighting against for years.*

2018 State of the County Address

The three Delaware County Commissioners – Jeff Benton, Barb Lewis, and Gary Merrell – presented their annual State of the County address on Tues., March 13. We were not at the ticketed event, and the PowerPoint presentation is not yet available on the public website. We therefore have to rely on second-hand reports such as the detailed summary provided by D. Anthony Botkin in the Delaware Gazette (3/14).

Delaware County has grown to 204,500 residents, which has led to significant revenue increases. Today the county is in robust financial health, according to the commissioners. It is one of only 2 counties in the state that maintains an AAA rating from both Standard & Poor's and from Moody's. The general fund of almost \$100 million has 3 major sources of revenue: sales tax (62%), services provided (13%), and property taxes (12%). (It is not clear where the other 13% come from.) The county's operating budget for 2018 is \$100.8 million, but it also manages additional funds from the state and the feds. The major expenditures are capital investments in buildings and infrastructure, esp. roads and sewers. The new courthouse was \$38 million, and \$30+ million was spent on Sawmill Parkway. The county's 5-year plan for road improvements projects another \$200 million. Obviously, the county's 1,272 employees also take up a huge junk of the pie.

While the commissioners focused on the county's finances, other things were mentioned as well. According to Lewis, 51% of the adult population are college graduates. The median income is \$92,000, and the homeownership rate is 82%. Life expectancy is 80 years, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has once again named Delaware County as the healthiest one in Ohio.

From what we gather, the commissioners accentuated the positive. Apparently, there was no mention of poverty, food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, racial tensions, or the opioid crisis. It may be true that many people in the southern portions of the county have 6-figure incomes, but that is certainly not true for the City of Delaware. Judging from the commissioners' report, everyone and everything in Delaware County is peachy – like in the fictional town of Lake Wobegon from Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion" where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.

Equal Pay for Women

The commissioners of Franklin County have approved a resolution that they will officially support equal pay for equal work.

Despite the 1963 Equal Pay Act, women are reported to earn an average 80.5 cents for every \$1 a man makes for the same work, according to a 2017 U.S. Census Bureau report. Franklin County employs about 1,400 people. Last year, they adopted a resolution raising the minimum hourly wage for its workers to \$13.69, almost twice the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. – Let's hope the Delaware County Commissioners will soon follow with similar resolutions that will raise the minimum wage for its 1,272 employees and guarantee equal pay for women.

Delaware County Is Healthiest in Ohio

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has issued its annual health ratings, and Delaware County is once again the healthiest in Ohio. The foundation ranks each county in 9 categories: adult smoking, adult obesity, food environment, physical inactivity, access to exercise opportunities, excessive drinking, alcohol-impaired driving deaths, sexually transmitted diseases & teen births. The bottom five counties are among Ohio's most impoverished Appalachian counties (Adams, Pike, Jackson, Vinton, and Gallia). The report demonstrates that there is a clear link between wealth and health on the one hand and poverty and poor health outcomes on the other. It might be said that your health, well-being & life expectancy depend on your ZIP code. – It must be noted that being the healthiest county in Ohio does not mean everything is fine. In many areas, Ohio ranks at or near the bottom nationally, including health. There is always room for improvement, as Delaware County Health Commissioner Shelia Hiddleston readily admits. More can be and must be done to fight food insecurity, obesity, substance abuse, and infant mortality.

Sacred Garden Farm

Sacred Garden Farm is a country-style inn, a guest-and-retreat house, a healing space, a class-and-event venue, and nature preserve located at 221 Hyatts Rd., next to the All Life Center (123 Hyatts Rd.) and across the street from Phoenix Books (124 Hyatts Rd.). It offers visitors the opportunity to become intimate with nature, relax, and rejuvenate. Owner Maggie Hardin, LMT & RM, is a licensed massage therapist, Reiki master teacher, educator, and artist with strong roots in spiritual discovery work who provides services, workshops, and classes to individuals as well as groups. Using ancient techniques, she and her associates are healers of body, mind, and soul. Among the classes are Reiki (all levels), medicinal herbs, food canning and preserving, crystals & gemstones, organic gardening, raising chickens, building an earthen oven, and so on. For example, from May 26-27, there will be an overnight workshop entitled "Feminine Alchemy" (see Eventbrite). In addition, various items are for sale. It is also possible to rent the entire farm for a retreat or event. The facility is open weekdays and weekends, but for specific hours check Facebook or send an email to comfortspark2003@yahoo.com. The website is www.sacredgardenfarm.com.

Fresh Thyme Now Offers Home Delivery

Fresh Thyme is the latest grocer to offer home delivery for residents in Central Ohio. Fresh Thyme specializes in organic, natural, and healthy private-label foods as well as supplements and body-care products. It currently has stores in Columbus (near Dublin), Gahanna, Westerville, and Worthington. According to a news release, Fresh Thyme is able to deliver items in as little as an hour when orders are placed through FreshThymeDelivers.com or the Instacart mobile app.

Preservation Parks Reforests Land

Preservation Parks of Delaware County is in the middle of the largest tree-planting and reforestation project it has ever undertaken in its decades-old history. With the help of a \$2.8 million grant from OEPA's Clean Ohio Fund, Preservation Parks is in process of acquiring a total of 230 acres of land in the floodplain below the Alum Creek Dam along Bale Kenyon Rd. The new park will be open to the public and include picnic shelters & restrooms, connecting trails, and access points for fishing & kayaking. 112 acres of the land are currently being reforested. The effort involves 550 6-year-old burlap-wrapped trees, 17,000 seedlings, and shrubs. The trees are a variety of native species and include oaks, hackberry, sycamore, buckeye, hornbeam, black cherry, sumac, and others. The labor is provided by park employees, volunteers, K-12 students, and Boy Scouts.

Use Recyclable Shopping Bags!

The Columbus Zoo & Aquarium encourages you to be "green" and use recyclable bags on your next shopping trip. Whether you are at the grocery, the mall, or local shop, don't forget reusable bags. Keep them stashed in the trunk of your car and make an effort to grab them on your way into the store. By refusing plastic bags, you'll help keep the oceans and waterways clean for the many animals who call it home. – The Columbus Zoo & Aquarium will celebrate Earth Day on April 22 in grand style.

2018 BIA Parade of Homes

The Building Industry Association of Central Ohio has announced that the 2018 BIA Parade of Homes will be Sept. 1-16, 2018. It is open Labor Day. The location is Eversole Run in Jerome Village (Jerome Township) in the Dublin City School District. Eversole Run is an exclusive neighborhood within the expansive Jerome Village community that offers residents a feeling of privacy & seclusion. Home prices range from \$750,000 to more than \$2 million, with homes situated on spacious, park-like lots surrounded by mature trees, a ravine & a water feature. General admission is \$15, parking \$5. Children 12 & under are free.

Columbus Creates Police Oversight Commission

Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther has appointed a 17-member commission to review the city's law-enforcement policies and to make specific recommendations. The commission was formed to address the city's record-breaking number of homicides as well as the deep schism between police & minority communities. It will analyze the division's recruitment tactics, training, policies & procedures, incl. use-of-force policies, training for de-escalation & implicit bias. Commission members can expect to go on ride-alongs, and they will also tour the police academy. An organizer with the People's Justice Project, Tammy Fournier-Alsaada, expressed concern that this might be "another quiet-the-black-community-down commission" rather than a body that makes concrete, actionable recommendations. Time will tell. The commission will first meet in April.

Blacks Disproportionately Homeless

Black people are dramatically overrepresented in national and local homeless populations. A new study by the Center for Social Innovation looked at the situation in Atlanta, Columbus, Dallas, New York, San Francisco, and Tacoma and found that about two-thirds of people experiencing homelessness in those areas were black. Among young people between the ages 18 to 24, blacks accounted for 78% of that group! In Franklin County, blacks make up 22% of the general population and about 40% of people living in poverty, but they represent 65% of those served in the homeless system.

Colorblind solutions to the problem are inadequate. Experts recommend an acute focus on racial equity. A multi-pronged approach is needed that involves law enforcement, social services, housing, employment, schools, and foster care. The Center makes several specific recommendations. Among them are eviction-prevention legislation and more affordable housing. It also notes that the homeless-services workforce does not reflect the diversity of the people in the system, a deficit that can affect perspective.

Local Microloans

Some Ohio payday lenders charge 500% interest or more. That has prompted the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Diocese of Columbus, a Catholic organization, to come up with an alternative plan. The Licking County chapter was first to make affordable microloans to needy customers, and since then society operations in Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox, and Ross counties have followed suit. The program coordinator, Deb Zabloudil, says she hopes the program will eventually expand to all of the diocese's 23 counties.

The microloan program, which is open to people of all faiths, lends up to \$500 to individuals in need, even if they have questionable credit. Loans can be for necessary car or home repairs, educational or medical bills. Licking Co. is also experimenting with loans for apartment security deposits or to pay back payday lenders. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul works with local credit unions to offer the loans at low interest rates. If an individual defaults, the society assumes the risk.

When we think of "microlending" or "microcredit," we may think of far-away developing countries such as Bangladesh. However, right here in the U.S. there is also a great need for microloan programs. Too many people live from hand to mouth and are unprepared when faced with a crisis. The fact that you never hear about that need in official state-of-the-city, state-of-the-county, state-of-the-state, and state-of-the-nation addresses does not make it less true. Microloans are not a silver bullet, but they can be part of the solution. Visit www.svdcolumnbus.org for more info.



ECO Center Offers Summer Day Camps

The ECO Center at 1757 County Rd. 59 in Caledonia (Morrow County) once again offers two summer day camps. Session #1 (for kids ages 6-11 years) runs from June 18-22, Session #2 (for kids ages 4-6 years) from July 16-20. Both camps emphasize nature exploration and experiential learning. Visit www.ecocenterohio.com for more info. – The ECO Center, founded in 2014, has the following mission statement: "To provide safe, fun, outdoor experiences (...) through environmental education and hands-on learning opportunities." An annual fall festival is the marquee event of the center. The 2018 dates are the weekends of Oct. 6/7 & 13/14.

Beaches Open to Dogs through May 19

The ODNR has designated more than 30 state park beaches as dog-exercise areas, allowing owners to legally walk their dogs without leashes. The designation will last until May 19 when normal operational rules will resume. The dog-exercise areas will be offered during normal park hours. Central Ohio state parks that will offer such areas include Alum Creek and Delaware State Park. Chances are the gates to the parking areas will be down until Memorial Day. Dog owners will have to reach the beaches through adjacent access points.

STATE OF OHIO

Kasich's State of the State Address Lacked Substance

John Kasich's last State-of-the-State Address at Otterbein Univ. in Westerville (March 6) sure was an odd one. Some called it "a sermon," others "a swan song." In some ways, it was also an advertisement for his new book, "Two Paths: America Divided or United," out April 25. The governor spent most of his time talking about "the meaning of life" and the values and virtues that have guided him. He also dropped a lot of big names of philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Camus) and theologians (Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Wilberforce, Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King), some of which he mispronounced. Instead of discussing Ohio's economy, he stressed the importance of things like love, compassion, humility, forgiveness, personal responsibility, justice, respect for others, and human connectedness. He also urged people to "slow down" and focus on what really matters in life. Humans find fulfillment in reaching out and supporting each other – not in pursuing money or medals. It is easy to agree with these idealistic and inspiring tenets.

However, listeners hoping to learn something about the actual economic and social state of the state, or actionable new policies, left empty-handed. According to Kasich, progress has been made in a number of areas (healthcare, disabilities, opioids, poverty, criminal-justice & prison reform, human trafficking), but he provided no specifics whatsoever. He did not tackle job creation or education in a meaningful way either. Although he claimed in the end that "Ohio is back" and "Ohio is strong again," he submitted no details and no evidence to back up his claim.

The truth is that Ohio has made little progress since Kasich became governor. He was not a change agent and has not turned the underperforming state around. Job creation has been anemic, and

educational outcomes have been poor. The state ranks at or near the bottom of the nation in multiple areas. For example, it is the state with the most opioid overdoses and the worst air pollution. There is not much the governor could brag about even if he wanted to.

In addition, Kasich may or may not run again for U.S. president in 2020. Ultimately, his address seemed to be less about Ohio, where his footprint is fading, than about his national ambitions. His content-free speech was designed to position him for that race and to accentuate the differences that exist between him and Trump – the “two paths” his new book speaks of. However, these differences are mainly in tone, not in substance. Kasich’s track record is crystal-clear. From abortion to charter schools, from casinos to gun rights, from environmental deregulations to fracking, any disagreement between him and Trump is a distinction without a difference. There is no daylight between the two Republicans.

Job Growth Lagging in Ohio

According to the Dept. of Job and Family Services, Ohio added only 12,500 new jobs in 2017 – the lowest number in many years. (The number was later changed to 32,200, creating doubt about the veracity of any numbers provided by the Kasich administration.) The state still has about 90,000 fewer jobs today than it did in 2000. The number stands in stark contrast to the robust job growth across the nation. Ohio faces many problems, despite politicians’ pronouncements to the contrary. There is demand for talent, but the workforce is older and lacks young, well-educated employees. Many prospective employees don’t qualify for jobs because of drug problems or criminal records. Millennials often move out of state for better-paying jobs and LGBT protections, which are inadequate in Ohio. The state does have some bright spots (Central Ohio is one of them), but overall the state ranks at or near the bottom of the nation in many categories.

Another job study, by 2 OSU researchers, uses income-per-person data to compare and contrast Ohio’s performance with other states. In the 1950s, Ohio’s workers enjoyed an income level that was above the U.S. average. The last time Ohio’s income per person matched the U.S. level was 1968. In 2016, income per person in Ohio was 9.4% below the U.S. average, a difference of \$4,678. Some 700,000 manufacturing jobs were lost, and many workers and communities were forgotten. Ohio’s next governor will need to develop a comprehensive strategy to move the state forward to stop the decades-long decline.

School-Lunch Participation Rate Remains High

The school-lunch participation rate in Ohio has not budged in recent years. According to figures from the Ohio Dept of Education, this school year 729,381 students of Ohio’s 1.8 million students (40.52%) are eligible for the free or reduced federal lunch program. That’s higher than the 36% in 2007, before the start of the economic downturn. The figure is consistent with other data. Ohio’s median income is \$45,210 (\$46,597 in 2007); the poverty rate is 14.6% (13% in 2007); and food-stamp enrollment is 13.7% (9.5% in 2007). The numbers show that Ohio never fully recovered from the 2008/09 recession.

Ohio Dems Propose \$15 Minimum Wage

Some Ohio Democratic lawmakers are calling for a \$12 minimum wage by 2019 and a \$15 minimum wage by 2025. An increase is overdue because Ohio’s current minimum wage of \$8.30 per hour (for tipped workers \$4.15) has not kept up with inflation. When accounting for inflation, many workers have actually seen a decline in their wages compared to the previous generation. Despite the fact that many people work full-time, they live in poverty. Seven of Ohio’s 10 most common jobs have an annual median wage of less than 130% of the federal poverty level for a family of three. Among the Ohio lawmakers who are calling for an increase in the minimum wage are Sen. Joe Schiavoni (D-Boardman) and Rep. Brigid Kelly (D-Cincinnati). Republicans remain opposed. They prefer to see wealth accumulated in the hands of the few, the proud, the wealthy.

Ohio Changes Driver-License Procedure

Driver licenses and identification cards will no longer be produced while customers wait at one of the 180 offices in the state. To ensure greater security & identification protection – and to save

money –, the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) is introducing a single, central point of production. As of July 2, 2018, customers will receive their licenses in the mail about 10 days after having visited a Deputy Registrar. Driver licenses and identification cards will continue to be valid for 4 years. They require a new photograph with every renewal. Costs will remain unchanged. For more info, visit www.bmv.ohio.gov.

12.4% of Ohio Drivers Are Uninsured

Ohio motorists are required by law to have car insurance, but for a variety of reasons many lack coverage. Affordability appears to be the main barrier. The state’s poverty rate is 14.6%. Of Ohio’s 7.8 million licensed drivers as of April 2016 (the most recent data available), 967,200 or 12.4% don’t have insurance. That is slightly better than the national average, which is 13.0%. The state also has about 1 million people with suspended licenses. Some of them drive illegally and also don’t have insurance.

Sales-Tax Holiday Extended Indefinitely

Ohio’s sales-tax holiday will be made permanent if Gov. John Kasich signs the bill that lawmakers in both houses approved. He is expected to do so. The annual sales-tax exemption will occur on the first Fri., Sat., and Sun. in August of each year. It applies to clothing priced at \$75 or less and school supplies priced at \$20 or less.

Marsy’s Law

Marsy’s Law is now part of the Ohio Constitution after the measure was overwhelmingly approved by voters in Nov. 2017. Named for a woman who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend in 1983, Marsy’s Law is a bill of rights for crime victims. Under the law, police are now required to notify crime victims of their rights. They include the right to be present at all court proceedings involving their case, and the right to be notified when an offender is released or escapes from prison. Specifically, the amendment outlines 10 rights including the rights to: be treated with respect, fairness & dignity throughout the criminal justice process; notification in a timely manner of major proceedings & developments in the case; be notified of all changes to an offender’s status; be present at court proceedings and provide input to a prosecutor before a plea deal is struck; be heard at pleas or sentence proceedings or any process that may grant an offender’s release; receive restitution from the offender; refuse an interview, deposition or other discovery request made by the accused, except as authorized elsewhere in the Ohio Constitution. – The Ohio Attorney General has designed and produced 1.25 million hand-held cards that summarize those rights.

Ohio Is Getting New State Park

During his last “State of the State” address on March 6, Gov. John Kasich announced that ODNR has reached an agreement with AEP to purchase about 13,000 acres of reclaimed strip-mining land to create the Jesse Owens State Park and Wildlife Area in Muskingum & Morgan counties. The State will pay about \$26 million (about \$2,000 an acre) from hunting & fishing license fees and parks & watercraft funds over 3 years to acquire the property. Future purchases from AEP are also possible. – The problem with “land reclamation” or “land rehabilitation” is that the mining companies left behind soil that is largely dead and worthless, with little or no vegetation and wildlife. Not much will grow there for decades. It can no longer be used for agriculture, for instance. It will take generations for trees to sprout and animals to return. If you have ever visited “The Wilds” in southeastern Ohio, you understand that it will take hundreds of years, if ever, for strip-mined areas to fully recover. Still, attempts to heal and rehabilitate destroyed and abandoned land make sense.

FirstEnergy Closes Nuclear Plants

Ohio-based FirstEnergy Corp. has announced that it will shut down three nuclear plants in Ohio and Pennsylvania within the next 3 years. Davis-Besse nuclear plant near Toledo will be closed in 2020, followed by Perry plant near Cleveland and its Beaver Valley plant in Pennsylvania a year later. The three plants employ a combined total of 2,300 people. Leaders in both states have so far been unwilling to offer financial-rescue plans. The nuclear-energy industry struggles to compete with electricity plants that burn plentiful and cheap natural gas from fracking as well as with renewable energies.



An Ohio State Dog?

Republican Rep. Jeffery Rezac of Clayton has introduced legislation (House Bill 539) that makes the Labrador retriever Ohio's official state dog. Rezac says, the Lab reminds him of Ohioans – hardworking, loyal, loving, and protective. Ohio would become the 13th state to name a state dog, and the first to recognize labs as such. –

PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, called the measure well-intentioned. However, it fears a state-dog designation might entice in-state and out-of-state puppy mills to produce labs in greater numbers, exacerbating Ohio's overpopulation of abandoned and homeless dogs. For that reason, it might make more sense to designate "the shelter dog" or "the adoptable dog" as Ohio's official canine.

THE NATION

President for Life?

When Donald Trump heard that China has abandoned the 2-term limit for President Xi Jinping, he was intrigued about the president-for-life idea: "I think it's great. Maybe we'll want to give that a shot some day." The remark, made at Trump's Mar-o-Lago resort, was confirmed by an audio recording and a leading Republican lobbyist. Perhaps the President felt lighthearted that day, but the prospect of an autocratic and unaccountable dictator for life is not a laughing matter.

Repeal the Dickey Amendment!

Pressured by the National Rifle Association (NRA), Congress in 1996 passed the so-called Dickey Amendment. It stopped the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) from spending taxpayer money on gun-safety research. 22 years and more than 600,000 gun-shot victims later, there is a distinct paucity of information about why people shoot themselves or each other, and what can be done to prevent the gun-violence epidemic in the country. The author of the bill, Jay Dickey, R-Arkansas, has since stated that he regrets his role in stopping the CDC from researching gun violence. Like car crashes or the opioid crisis, gun violence is a serious public-health problem. Research should be encouraged and fully funded, not discouraged and censored.

Allies Fear the Worst

The firing of Rex Tillerson and his replacement with Mike Pompeo has left the world unnerved and worried about the future. It is clear that President Trump trusts his instincts & impulses more than he does expertise & experience. He has effectively written out the State Dept. and dismantled & eviscerated the foreign service. He does not believe in diplomacy and the mission of the agency. Partnerships, negotiations, and compromise have been shown the door. Increasingly, foreign leaders – especially strongmen – are dealing with the White House directly, circumventing the State Dept. Under sycophantic Pompeo, this trend will continue. He is known to pursue a hard line against China, Iran, and North Korea. On more than one occasion, he has proposed assassinations and military solutions, which is more in line with what Trump wants. Because of his support for the war in Iraq and torture, some senators have indicated that they plan to oppose Pompeo's confirmation.

Torture Back on the National Agenda

The use of waterboarding, sleep deprivation, confinement in boxes & other "enhanced interrogation techniques" is one of the darkest chapters in American history. However, the use of torture against enemy combatants is now back on the national agenda. President Trump has often claimed – falsely – that "torture works."

During the 2016 presidential campaign, he stated, "I would bring back waterboarding, and I would bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding." He may get his wish now. After CIA Director Mike Pompeo has been appointed Secretary of State, Gina Haspel, 61, has been nominated to take over the Central Intelligence Agency. She is a career officer with decades of international deployments under her belt. One of her undercover missions was overseeing a secret CIA prison in Thailand where suspected members of El Qaeda were brutally interrogated and waterboarded. Saudi citizen Abu Zubaydah was waterboarded at least 83 times in one month, sent to the brink of death, revived, and questioned over and over again. Wikipedia says he also experienced torture techniques such as forced nudity, sleep deprivation, confinement in small boxes, deprivation of solid food, stress positions, and physical assaults. While in CIA custody, he lost his left eye. He was also tortured in a secret Polish prison. Zubaydah remains a political prisoner in Guantánamo Bay even though the CIA informed him that it no longer considers him to be of any significance. Videotapes of the torture sessions were ordered destroyed in 2005 – by Gina Haspel.

With Donald Trump as president and Gina Haspel at the helm of the CIA, the Secret Service may once again be tempted to resort to illegal and inhumane treatment of detainees. Her elevation would send an undeniable signal to the world that President Trump is endorsing the practice of torture. It is expected that Haspel will be sharply questioned during the confirmation process. The Senators will want to take full advantage of this unique opportunity to have a meaningful conversation on waterboarding and other torture techniques. Much of what transpired under George W. Bush is still secret and largely unknown to the public.

For the record – torture is not nearly as effective as creating a meaningful rapport with prisoners. The New York Times (3/15) also notes that "the use of torture and secret foreign prisons ... was a boon to terrorist groups, helping their propaganda and recruitment efforts."

Trump Rallies Increased Violence in 2016

A new Univ. of Pennsylvania study, published in the journal "Epidemiology," looks at the link between political rhetoric and physical assaults during the 2016 presidential campaign. In 31 cities where Donald Trump held campaign events, there were 2.3 more assaults that day than on average. On the other hand, 38 rallies that Hillary Clinton held were not found to be associated with an increase in violence. Researchers noted that Trump seemed to grant his followers permission to verbally abuse and physically assault other people when he made contagious statements such as "I'll beat the crap out of you," "I'd like to punch him in the face," and "Maybe he should have been roughed up." He even offered to pay the legal fees of his supporters in case they got into trouble with the law. – The researchers note that not all rallies and cities were studied and that the size of police presence also affected their numbers.

The Economy Is Downshifting

Despite the \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts signed by President Trump in December, the U.S. economy has started to downshift. Some people in the Trump camp (e.g., Larry Kudlow, who is not trained in economics) are still fantasizing of a 5% GDP growth rate or higher in 2018, but reputable economists at Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, and Moody's Analytics have all lowered their estimates to 2% or lower. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's GDPNow, which is closely followed on Wall Street, is projecting a growth rate of no more than 1.8%. Turbulences in the world market due to a Trump-initiated "trade war" could further soften the economy. Nervous investors are rediscovering the pain of volatility, but they haven't panicked – yet. Bigger, more violent declines may be on the way, but at the moment an immediate recession is not in sight.

The Price of Gold Is Up

In bleak times, gold shines. As stocks are beginning to stumble amidst fears of global trade wars and a coming bear market, people are once again looking at gold as a safe haven. Investors typically see gold as an insurance policy during times of unease. The fact that gold prices are now rising again is a sign that investors are nervous. After President Trump announced his tariff plans, stocks tanked. Gold, however, climbed by more than 3%, fluctuating between \$1,320-1,350 per ounce at the end of March. – Before buying gold,

however, consider that it is a terrible investment. It does not yield any interest or dividend, and it is very volatile.

Democrat Lamb Wins in Pennsylvania

Democrat Conor Lamb, 33, narrowly won against Republican Rick Saccone, 60, in a hotly contested special election in Pennsylvania to fill the 18th Congressional District seat after disgraced Republican Tim Murphy resigned. (Libertarian Drew Miller received only 0.6% of the votes.) The Pittsburgh-area contest was widely seen as a national referendum on Donald Trump and the Republican Party. The loss is another embarrassment for the president, who campaigned for Saccone, and an ominous warning sign for the GOP. National Republicans poured in some \$14 million outside money into the election. After a recount, Saccone conceded the race. Democrats, on the other hand, are elated and energized. Lamb's win is a template that is likely to be emulated in other parts of the country.

Walmart Demonstrates Social Responsibility

The largest retailer in the U.S., Walmart, has announced it will no longer sell firearms and ammunition to anyone under the age of 21. Walmart already stopped selling AR-15 guns and other semi-automatic weapons in 2015. It also does not sell bump stocks and large-capacity magazines. Dick's Sporting Goods has made a similar announcement. It, too, will ban the sale of all guns to anyone under 21 and immediately stop selling assault-style rifles. The National Rifle Association (NRA) is pushing hard against any and all attempts to restrict gun sales and impose age limits, but for Walmart and even for Dick's Sporting Goods, the hunting category represents a small segment of its sales figures. The brand of both retailers is likely to gain much more than they will lose.

"Testilying" a Pervasive Problem

False testimony by police ("testilying") remains an entrenched practice, according to a 2-part New York Times report. The practice of lying remains pervasive even in the new age of police cameras. Because plea deals are the normal outcome in legal cases, it is rare that lying officers have to defend themselves at hearings. Even in the few cases when officers' testimony did come under suspicion, there were no disciplinary consequences for the people involved. Police departments "are willfully ignoring what appear to be false statements, if not outright lies." As a result of the entrenched perjury problem, countless people end up behind bars for alleged crimes they did not commit.

Why the Innocent End Up in Prison

There is no question that career criminals and serial felons belong in prison. However, in a remarkable essay that appeared in the Delaware Gazette on March 15 writer John Grisham explained why the rate of wrongful convictions in the U.S. is high – anywhere between 2% and 10%. When applied to a prison population of 2.3 million, it means there could be between 46,000 and 230,000 innocent people locked away. Grisham, who serves on the board of the Innocence Project, provides the following reasons for the injustice: bad police work (incl. "testilying"), prosecutorial misconduct, false confessions, faulty eyewitness identification, lying jailhouse snitches, bad lawyering, sleeping judges, and junk science. According to Grisham, America's criminal-justice system is "broken," as evidenced by countless exonerations through belated DNA testing and other means.

More Employers Skip Drug Tests

The labor market is tight, and many employers are struggling to find qualified workers. In addition, marijuana is now legal in 9 U.S. states plus Washington, D.C. The result is a gradual decline of employers who drug-test prospective employees. Some say they don't care what people do in their recreational time. Others are willing to forgive minor things such as a marijuana conviction. Many companies have changed their policies quietly in recent years, to avoid attention. Others have publicly announced that they will no longer drug-test people altogether because it is, after all, an invasion of privacy. A 2017 survey estimates that the share of companies testing for marijuana has fallen from 77% to 66%. – To be sure, some jobs will always require drug tests, for safety reasons. However, in the majority of cases, drug tests are unnecessary and even harmful. They exclude entire groups from the labor market, a practice that has had

negative impact on economic growth & productivity and the national GDP.

Projections for Alzheimer Disease

According to the Alzheimer's Association's annual report, an estimated 5.7 million Americans suffered from Alzheimer disease in 2018, incl. 200,000 in Ohio. By 2025, the national figure is expected to grow by 29% to 7.1 million people age 65 or older living with the disease. For Ohio, a 13.6% increase is expected, or an additional 30,000 people. The total national cost of caring for people with Alzheimer disease will surpass \$277 billion in 2018. Family and other unpaid caregivers provide 18.4 billion hours of care, valued at \$232 billion. The disease is the 6th-leading cause of death in Ohio and nationally, but there is no known way to prevent, cure, or slow its progression. As the number of Americans age 65 or older is projected to grow from 53 million today to 88 million by 2050, the number of Alzheimer cases will increase proportionally unless a medical breakthrough occurs. – To read the full report of the Alzheimer's Association, visit www.alz.org.

Americans Continue to Get Heavier

New data published in JAMA show that Americans continue to get heavier. Nearly 40% had a body-mass index (BMI) of 30 or more and were considered obese. 7.7% of adults had a BMI of 40 or more and were considered severely obese. Previously, the numbers were 33.7% and 5.7%, respectively. Among children and teenagers, the current numbers are 18.5% and 5.6%, respectively. Being overweight heightens people's risk for heart disease, diabetes, and even some cancers. Public-health officials say that efforts to educate people about the health risks of a poor diet, lack of exercise, and obesity do not seem to work. Just telling people that there is a problem does not improve the situation. More needs to be done.

Is Netflix in Bed with Big Tobacco?

The anti-tobacco Truth Initiative has released a study that compares 7 popular Netflix show to 7 popular ABC, CBS, and NBC shows. The Netflix shows featured characters smoking almost three times as often as those produced by the broadcast networks. Many of the Netflix shows included in the study, incl. "Stranger Things" and "Fuller House," are aimed at children. In the past, the tobacco industry often used movies as a vehicle to advertise cigarettes and to create the perception that tobacco consumption was normal and desirable. The normalization of tobacco or alcohol can have a strong impact on a child's risk of future substance use and abuse. There is as yet no evidence that money has changed hands, but the frequency of smoking scenes has become so glaring that users of the service are asking, "Did Netflix get in bed with Big Tobacco?"

Jeff Bezos Is the Richest Man in the World

Jeff Bezos (Amazon) has replaced Bill Gates (Microsoft) as the world's richest man. According to Forbes, Bezos' wealth amounts to \$112 billion compared to Gates' \$90 billion at the end of 2017. Investor Warren Buffet holds the third position (\$84 billion). According to Forbes, there are 2,208 billionaires in the world today. Their total fortune is estimated to be \$9.1 trillion, an increase of 18% compared to last year. The median wealth of an American is \$55,876, according to the 2017 Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Report. It would take the combined wealth of 2.3 million Americans to equal the \$127 billion that the Amazon co-founder is now estimated to be worth.

"National Geographic" Admits Racist Coverage

"National Geographic" is full of images of primitive and savage black people, often depicted in their natural, unclothed state. More than once, the magazine opined that indigenous populations ranked low in intelligence. Urban, educated, and sophisticated Africans, on the other hand, have been completely absent. That image helped shape and cement the perception among many whites that blacks were inferior people.

A while back, "National Geographic" asked an outside reviewer (John Edwin Mason from the Univ. of Virginia) to take a look at how it has handled the issue of race in the past. His report was unsparing: "Throughout most of its history, National Geographic, in words and images, reproduced a racial hierarchy with brown and black people at the bottom, and white people at the top." The magazine has

now acknowledged that, for decades, its coverage was racist, and has pledged to hire a more diverse staff and to do better in the future.

David S. Wyman (1929-2018)

Historian David S. Wyman, professor emeritus at the Univ. of Massachusetts-Amherst, has died at the age of 89. He is best known for his uncompromising book "The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-45" (1984), which took him 15 years to research and complete. Drawing on a myriad of private and government records as well as media accounts, he found widespread indifference and even hostility to Jewish refugees as they were persecuted and exterminated in Nazi-occupied Europe. Reluctance and resistance, nationalism and nativism, and the existence of immigration quotas prevented many Jews from ever reaching the U.S. shore, making the country morally responsible for countless deaths. President Roosevelt, Wyman contended, was more concerned about angering anti-Semites than about helping the Jews. – Wyman's view is generally accepted as correct, but some scholars disagree with specific aspects of his conclusions, especially his unflattering criticism of Roosevelt and the Christian churches.

White Supremacist Groups More Active Than Ever

Inigorated by Donald Trump's election, white supremacist groups are busier than ever, according to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). In 2017, anti-Semitic episodes have increased by 57%. Among the more active groups are "Identity Evropa, the Patriot Front, and Vanguard America. In speeches and articles, flyers and banners, websites and social media they peddle their racist and sexist messages. Examples are: "America first – end immigration"; "Diversity is a code word for white genocide"; "Danger: Sharia city ahead"; "Feminists deserve the rope"; "Jews won't replace us"; "If you import the Third World, you become the Third World"; "Preserve white identity"; "America was founded by whites for whites"; "Americans are white, the rest must go"; "Africans are not Americans."

Richard Spencer and Antifa

White supremacist Richard Spencer says he is considering suspending his controversial speaking tour across the nation. He says escalating violence at his appearances have made attendance dangerous and difficult for his white-ethno-state supporters. He blames "Antifa" for taking away the "fun" he and other white-pride and white-power nationalists were having at the rallies. (In one of these rallies a counter-protester, Heather Heyer, was killed.)

Antifa (which stands for "anti-fascism") has confronted Spencer and other alt-right nationalists head-on at every opportunity. Its mission is to proactively deny bigots and fascists a platform even "before they have a chance to put their ideas into action" (Torch Antifa). Critics say that amounts to denying free speech to racists, ultra-right nationalists, and neo-Nazis. The lineage of antifa groups can be traced back to Weimar Germany when they were fighting Hitler's ascendant National Socialists.

The Most Dangerous Animals

Which animals are the most dangerous and kill the most people in the U.S.? Is it the maligned sharks or bears, snakes or scorpions? The answer may surprise you. – According to a study published in "Wilderness & Environmental Medicine," from 2008 to 2015 a total of 1,610 people were killed in encounters with animals. 478 of them (or 29.7%) were killed by bees, hornets, or wasps. Dogs came in second; 272 people (or 16.9%) were killed by canines. Children under the age of 10 were especially at risk of being mauled to death. Venomous scorpions, snakes, and spiders were responsible for 99 deaths (6%) during that time period, followed by farm animals such as cows, horses, or hogs (72 deaths or 4.5%). Wild animals such as bears, mountain lions, and sharks are known to occasionally attack and kill people, but they are not nearly as dangerous as commonly believed. There are years when not a single American was killed by a shark. – The data has some limitations. For example, fatalities resulting from collisions with deer and other wild animals are not included. According to the CDC, about 200 people die annually from such crashes.

The take-away message is that there is vast gap between our irrational fears and empirical reality. The things we are most afraid of are typically responsible for few deaths. The more dangerous

"killers" are perfectly normal things such as cars, guns, chemicals, cigarettes, ladders, and cheeseburgers.

Dog-Friendly Hotels

Younger generations view their companion animals as family members. When they travel, they often take their dogs with them. According to the American Pet Products Association, 37% of people travel with their animals, compared to 19% only one decade ago. Hotels have adapted, and many now welcome canine guests – typically for a surcharge, of course. The most dog-friendly accommodations are budget hotels (70%), but luxury hotels are not that far behind (43%).

"Fortnite," a Wildly Popular Video Game

Released by Epic Games in 2017, "Fortnite" has become a wildly popular video game played by millions. It has logged 45 million downloads, and in February 2018 it hit a peak of 3.4 million concurrent players. It is now the most watched and streamed video game in the world. It has become so popular that Epic's servers have struggled at times with connectivity issues and outages. Participants can choose a single-player mode or the more popular multi-player mode. Either way, players are air-dropped into a landscape with nothing but a pickaxe. They must then scavenge for resources, firearms, various other weapons, and ammunition that allow them to survive. The goal of the game is to be the last one standing. "It's 'The Hunger Games' as a video game," says one player. "Fortnite" is "teen"-rated, alleviating some parents' fears. However, it is clear that the recreational game is highly addictive, often preventing teenage or adult players from performing other important tasks. What we should be most concerned about is the brutal Social Darwinistic last-man-standing ideology that prioritizes the survival of the individual over the needs of the community. This is not a game that teaches compassion and empathy. Instead, it's all about shooting and battle skills, destruction and violence. By "killing" others and taking their resources, you ensure your own survival. The world of "Fortnite" is a dystopian nightmare, not a civilization you want to live in. It's "just a game," many will say. But it's a game that teaches all the wrong things. Who knows how hours, days, weeks, and months of playing "Fortnite" will warp and disable someone's mind, making individuals feel entitled to shoot and kill with impunity?

Autonomous Vehicle Kills Pedestrian

Elaine Herzberg, 49, made history when an Uber self-driving car hit and killed her while she was crossing a street in the Phoenix suburb of Tempe. The car did not slow down at all before impact. It marked the first fatality caused by an autonomous vehicle in the U.S. Uber is testing more than 100 self-driving cars in the Phoenix area, due to Arizona's loose regulations. Even on the federal level, there are few rules that regulate autonomous vehicles. After the accident, the company suspended testing in the U.S. and Canada. – A Tesla vehicle operating on Autopilot has since been involved in a fatal crash in California, killing driver Walter Huang.

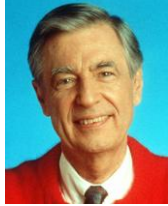
Safety advocates have long called for a moratorium on autonomous vehicles on public roads. Accidents are common even in fair weather. Rain, snow, ice and other real-world situations are particularly challenging for robotic vehicles. Their crash rate is actually double the rate of conventional cars. Technology companies say that eventually new cars will be safer than regular cars because they take humans out of the equation. So far, however, the technology has not lived up to expectations. It is still young and obviously not yet ready for show time. The tragic accident makes it clear that autonomous technology has a long way to go before it can be considered reliable, safe & trustworthy.

Utah Passes Free-Range Parenting Bill

Parents are sometimes charged with "child neglect" when they grant their kids the freedom to play, walk, or bike without adult supervision or to remain home unattended. Utah has now become the first known state to decriminalize such behavior. It has passed a law that prohibits child-welfare authorities from taking children away from families when caught doing those various activities alone, provided they are adequately fed, clothed, and housed. Utah Gov. Gary R. Herbert has signed the measure after it was unanimously approved by both chambers of the legislature. The law exempts from the definition of child neglect activities children can do without parental supervision

such as walking or biking to and from school, shops, or recreational facilities, play outside, or remain at home unattended.

Safety is important, but so is the learning opportunity for children to experience and navigate the world, learn freedom and independence, and to gain confidence and competency. In Arkansas, a similar measure died amid fears of child abduction. Stranger abduction is very rare; family members are typically responsible for abductions to the extent they occur.



A Mister Rogers Forever Postage Stamp

"Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" was a popular PBS show that aired between 1968 and 2001. Fred Rogers, the host, entertained and educated generations of Americans during that time. He died in 2003 at the age of 74. He was also proverbially gentle & kind, compassionate & neighborly. The U.S. Postal Service has now released a forever stamp featuring Fred Rogers. Postmaster General Megan Brennan said at the unveiling that "Mister Rogers represents the best of America and will do so always." – We do not know if President Trump ever watched Mr. Rogers on television, but he might have learned a thing or two from him.

Fashion Houses Abandon Animal Fur

Versace has become the latest fashion house that will phase out animal fur from its collections. The Italian company is joining Gucci, Giorgio Armani, and Hugo Boss that have already done so in an effort to be more environmentally friendly.

THE WORLD

41 Countries without U.S. Ambassador

USA Today reported that 41 out of 188 U.S. embassies and international organizations still lack an ambassador since President Trump took office. Ambassadors are badly needed in important countries such as Germany, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Turkey. In some countries (e.g., France), Trump appointed campaign donors such as Jamie McCourt, a real-estate developer who gave \$400,000 to the Trump Victory fund. Under the 45th president, the State Dept. plays a much-diminished role. The Trump Administration seems to prioritize military solutions over cultural, diplomatic, and economic ties.

Pope Francis Remains Popular

Pope Francis, Pontiff for 5 years (since 2013), has offered support for immigrants, called for action on climate change, and criticized unfettered capitalism. However, he remains popular among Catholics in the world, according to a new study by the Pew Research Center. His overall approval rate is 84%, only a 1-point drop since 2014. – In the U.S. it is a different picture, however. American Catholics have a less positive view of the Pope than before. One quarter of them (24%) say he is naïve, and one third (34%) say the pontiff is too liberal. The division is political rather than theological. Democrats or Democratic-leaning Catholics have not changed their positive opinion of Pope Francis at all, but the share of Republicans or Republican-leaning Catholics who say that Francis is too "liberal" has more than doubled and stands at 55%. Conservatives such as Donald Trump and Steve Bannon, Paul Ryan and Rick Santorum have all attacked the Pope in a war of words, seeking to weaken his legitimacy.

Saint Óscar Arnulfo Romero of El Salvador?

Oscar Arnulfo Romero (1917-1980), Archbishop of El Salvador, spoke out against poverty, social injustice, torture, and assassinations in his home country. He paid particular attention to the most poor & marginalized, which enraged both the wealthy elite and the military. He also criticized the U.S. (Jimmy Carter) for supporting the military juntas in El Salvador and other Latin American states, which were responsible for numerous abuses & atrocities. In 1980, he

was assassinated by a right-wing death squadron while holding mass. No one was ever convicted for the crime. "San Romero" is one of the most revered figures in Latin America, where he is considered a martyr. The process of beatification and canonization was started by Pope Paul II and is being concluded by Pope Francis. The Pontiff reportedly plans to officially bestow sainthood upon Romero during an upcoming Synod of Bishops in Rome (Oct. 2018).

U.S. Conducts Shadow War in Niger

Niger is a large land-locked country in northern Africa, surrounded by Algeria, Mali, Upper Volta, Nigeria, Chad, and Libya. Most Americans are probably completely unaware that the American military is fighting a shadowy war against Islamic militants in that country and is engaged in building a major drone base there. Officially, the military was deployed to train and advise local forces in Niger. However, it is not only engaged in self-defense when attacked; the troops are actively involved in clearing hostile territory, pursuing enemy militants, and conducting kill-or-capture raids. Four U.S. soldiers died in a battle last year, and there have been at least 10 other previously undisclosed hostile engagements involving American commando teams. Observers feel that the Trump administration is using Niger as a test case whether the military or the CIA can wage war, conduct airstrikes, make forays, and carry out kill-or-capture operations without permission from Congress. When plans for the drone base were announced in 2013 (under President Obama), it was stated that the drones would be unarmed and only used for surveillance, not airstrikes. However, the U.S. has since carried out at least 4 known assault airstrikes against neighboring Libya that Africa Command failed to disclose at the time they occurred.

Vietnam Remembers My Lai

On March 16, 1968, American troops were responsible for one of the worst massacres in U.S. history. Within a few hours, some 500 unarmed civilians in the village of My Lai, including infants, were killed by an out-of-control military unit. The murder was committed by soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade, 23rd (American) Infantry Division. Surviving villagers reported that some of the women were gang-raped and their bodies mutilated with bayonets. It was the most shocking episode of the entire Vietnam War. Despite orders to keep information about the attack secret, a year later it became known to the American public and helped change the attitude about the Vietnam War, which ended in 1975. 26 soldiers were charged with criminal offenses, but only Lieutenant William Calley, Jr., was convicted. Found guilty of killing 22 villagers, he was originally given a life sentence, but served only 3½ years under house arrest. – We saw and heard zero coverage by the American media on March 16, 2018. However, the BBC and other international news agencies acknowledged the 50th anniversary of the My Lai massacre.

Holocaust Museum Revokes Award for Myanmar Leader

The winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, Aung San Suu Kyi, has lost the prestigious Elie Wiesel human rights award that the U.S. Holocaust Museum bestowed upon her in 2012. She has been internationally condemned for not speaking and acting against the brutal persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar, also called Burma / Birma. Thousands of Rohingya have been killed and buried in mass graves. Their villages were destroyed in organized ethnic-cleansing operations, which – according to the U.N. – bore "the hallmarks of a genocide." Some 700,000 Rohingya have fled to neighboring Bangladesh where they live in refugee camps. The persecution continues to this day. Malaysian leader Najib Razak has voiced his fear that Rohingya camps will be a fertile ground for radicalization and recruitment by Islamic State and other radical groups if the world fails to address the problem.

"The Nature Fix" by Florence Williams

Florence Williams, a contributing editor for "Outside" magazine, has written a new book – "The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative" (Norton 2018, 304 pp., illus., \$15.95). The transcontinental study investigates in detail how the great outdoors have a positive effect on the human brain and can do everything from lifting moods to helping veterans cope with PTSD. The author suggests that it is important to stay grounded in nature.