

Community Matters

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

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

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

CALENDAR OF LOCAL EVENTS

Organ Recital at Asbury's (1/2)

Dr. Joseph Musser will give an organ recital at Asbury UMC at 55 W. Lincoln Ave. on Thurs., Jan. 2 (12:15-12:45 pm). Music will mark the Twelve Days of Christmas, the New Year, and Epiphany. Free & open to the public.

"Fire and Ice" First Friday (1/3)

Main Street Delaware celebrates First Friday on Jan 3 (6-8 pm). Come and warm yourself by the fire as you enjoy the art of ice sculpting. Fire barrels and an ice sculptor will be downtown for your enjoyment.



Gallery 22: Yasue Sakaoka (1/3 – 2/22)

Gallery 22 at 22 E. Winter St. will open a new art exhibit with works by notable Japanese-American artist Yasue Sakaoka on Fri., Jan. 3 (6-8:30 pm). Sakaoka, born in 1933, is a naturalized American citizen. The octogenarian is not expected to be at the reception, but

she is still an active and creative artist and mentor. The show includes some of her large origami pieces as well as collages, paintings, and drawings. The exhibit ends Feb. 22. Normal opening hours are Fri. and Sat., 6-8:30 pm. Free & open to the public.

One People (1/9)

One People is a local organization dedicated to bridging the ethnic divisions within the community. The group meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month. The next meeting is Jan. 9 (7 pm) at First Presbyterian Church, 73 W. Winter St. Please use the back entry. On the agenda are preparations for the upcoming Martin Luther King breakfast on Jan. 20, the OWU Community Day on Jan. 25, and the Juneteenth Festival on June 20.

Sustainable Delaware Meets (1/11)

Sustainable Delaware Ohio (SDO) meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month. The next meeting is Jan. 11 (9-11 am) at Second Ward Community Initiative (SWCI), 50 Ross St. The organization promotes economic, social, and environmental sustainability through awareness, advocacy, and action. The meetings are open to the public.

7th Democratic Debate (1/14)

The 7th Democratic Presidential Debate is scheduled for Tues., Jan. 14. It will be held at Drake Univ. in Des Moines, Iowa. Once again, the qualifiers have been tightened – to the detriment of minority candidates. The qualification deadline is Jan. 10. (Additional debates in the early-voting states are scheduled for Feb. 7, 19, and 25.)



"Anytime Fitness" Ribbon Cutting (1/15)

Anytime Fitness in the Walmart / Kroger shopping center at 1710 Columbus Pike, Suite 218 (U.S. 23 S) will have a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wed., Jan. 15 (3:30 pm). Guests are invited to stay for a health & fitness fair from 4-7 pm.

"Delaware County's Last Covered Bridge" (1/15)

The Delaware County Historical Society (DCHS) is hosting another monthly series of events in 2020. On Wed., Jan. 15 (7 pm), David Simmons will discuss "Delaware County's Last Covered Bridge." The Chambers Road Covered Bridge, built in 1883, crosses Big Walnut Creek. The event, which is free & open to the public, will be held at The Barn at Stratford (2690 Stratford Rd.) Donations are accepted. To learn more about the DCDH or this presentation, visit www.delawareohiohistory.org.

Delaware Does Entrepreneur Gathering (1/16)

In an ongoing effort to promote, build, and grow an entrepreneurial culture, the City of Delaware and OWU are bringing together local entrepreneurs on Thurs., Jan. 16 (8-10 am) at the Delaware Entrepreneur Center, 70 S. Sandusky St. This is intended to be the start of a monthly gathering. Go to www.delawareohio.net to register.

"State of the City" Address (1/16)

Delaware Mayor Carolyn Kay Riggle and City Manager Tom Homan will present their annual "State of the City" address at SourcePoint, 800 Cheshire Rd., on Thurs., Jan. 16 (11:45 am – 1 pm). Tickets are \$25 (\$20 for members of the Delaware Area Chamber of Commerce) and include a lunch buffet. Please RSVP by Jan. 6. A free non-lunch option is not available.

Delaware County Democratic Party (1/16)

The Central Committee of the DCDP meets Thurs., Jan. 16 (7:30 pm) at Willis Education Center (2nd floor), 74 W. William St. As the 2020 primaries and elections draw nearer, you are likely to meet some Democratic candidates there. The meetings are open to the public, but only Central Committee members can vote.

"Mortality: A Gallery" (1/17)

"Mortality: A Gallery: is an exhibition by Austin Tolliver at 53 N. Sandusky St. (the "Gather" place) on Fri., Jan. 17 (7-9 pm). Austin Tolliver is a Nashville-based singer and songwriter, but he also does a lot of photography. (Repeated attempts to learn more about the show were unsuccessful.)

OWU Middle School Honor Band Festival Concert (12/18)

The OWU Middle School Honor Band Festival Concert, featuring nearly 175 middle school musicians from across Ohio (7th & 8th grade), will perform Sat., Jan. 18 (7-9 pm) in Gray Chapel inside University Hall, 61 S. Sandusky St. Membership in the Honor Band was competitive. Because of the large number of musicians selected, they will perform as 2 bands, conducted by Mary Kate McNally, OWU Marching Band director; Richard Edwards, associate professor of music; and Yuji Jones, band director for Marion City Schools' Grant Middle & Harding High schools. Songs include "Sunchaser" by Carol Brittin Chambers, "Woven" by OWU alumna Nicole Piuanno '07, "Ancient Flower" by Yukiko Nishimura, and "The Devil's Workshop" by Kimberly Archer. Free & open to the public. The concert will also be streamed live at www.owu.edu/stream. – This year's OWU High School Honor Band Festival is scheduled from Feb. 13-15.

MLK Celebration (1/19-20)

Rev. Dr. Ervin Smith from MTSO will discuss Martin Luther King Jr. on Sun., Jan. 19 (3 pm) in conjunction with a worship service at Delaware City Vineyard, 32 Troy Rd. He is the author of several titles on Christian ethics and Black theology.

Dr. Korie L. Edwards from OSU will be the featured speaker at the 2020 MLK Breakfast Celebration in the Benes Rooms of OWU HWCC Campus Center on Mon., Jan. 20. She is a national scholar in the area of American religion, gender in the African-American church, and racial integration. The breakfast buffet opens at 7:45 am, followed by the program (8:30-9:30 am). Tickets are \$25 and may be purchased online at <2020mlkbreakfastdelaware.eventbrite.com>. A table of 8 is \$175. Proceeds benefit outstanding high-school graduates of Delaware city and county schools. – Dr. Edwards will also deliver a community speech, "Pursuing the Dream," on Mon., Jan. 20 (12 pm) in 301 Merrick Hall on the OWU campus. That event is free & open to the public.

Mindy McGinnis at Beanbag Books (1/21)

Beanbag Books at 25 W. Winter St. is hosting a book-club session with Ohio author Mindy McGinnis on Tues., Jan. 21 (7 pm). McGinnis will discuss her book "A Madness So Discreet." McGinnis, who graduated from Otterbein Univ., is the author of a number of young-adult books. Her latest novel, "Be Not Far from Me," will be released March 3.

Main Street Delaware Dinner & Awards (1/22)

Main Street Delaware is hosting a progressive dinner and an annual awards ceremony on Wed., Jan. 22 (6-9 pm). All ticket-holders will begin at Gather, 53 N. Sandusky St., for appetizers, then enjoy more food and drink in various downtown establishments, and end at 1808 American Bistro, 29 E. Winter St., for dessert and the annual Main Street Delaware awards ceremony. Tickets are \$40 for one, \$75 for two, and \$150 for four. Only 100 tickets will be sold. Get yours online at www.mainstreetdelaware.com.

Stratford's "Book Talks" with Liz Barker (1/24)

Former librarian Liz Barker is once again doing the monthly "Book Talks" at Stratford Ecological Center (2083 Stratford Rd.) every 4th Friday of the month at 6:30 pm. The talks focus on the natural world, horticulture, homesteading, and the like. The topic for Fri., Jan. 24 is "Youthful Adventures." Once the rest of the program for 2020 is available, we will print it here. The cost is \$10 for the entire year to help with copying expenses.

Bishop Backers Community Day (1/25)

OWU Bishop Backers will host their Winter Community Day & Expo on Sat., Jan. 25 (12-3:30 pm) at OWU's Branch Rickey Arena and Gordon Field House at 105 S. Sandusky St. There will be a large indoor expo of nonprofits, agencies, and businesses as well as two basketball games (OWU v. Allegheny College). The Columbus Zoo is scheduled to come with some "ambassador" animals at 2:15 pm.

There is also an opportunity to pet dogs from the Humane Society. Plus there is a children's play area, provided by the YMCA. Free & open to the public, but donations of canned food to benefit the Delaware County Hunger Alliance are appreciated.

Gallant Farm Seed Swap (1/25)

Believe it or not, spring is not that far off, and avid gardeners are getting antsy to start with planning and planting. Preservation Parks is once again offering a free Seed Swap on Sat., Jan. 25 (1-2 pm) at Gallant Farm, 2150 Buttermilk Rd. Come and celebrate National Seed Swap Day with the Delaware County Master Gardeners. Swapped can be heirloom seeds, rhizomes, roots & tubers. If you have nothing to trade, come anyway. There is plenty to go around, and there will be fun activities.

Chinese New Year (1/25)

2020 will be the Year of the Rat in the Chinese zodiac calendar. Rats are smart animals – alert, agile, and resourceful. They embody intelligence and wisdom.

Juried High School Exhibit at Arts Castle (1/26 – 2/23)

The reception and awards ceremony for the Juried High School Exhibit will take place Sun., Jan. 26 (2-4) at the Arts Castle, 190 W. Winter St. Students from 8 participating high schools in Delaware County will showcase their work. A big crowd can be expected. The best entries will move on to the Ohio Governor's Youth Art Exhibition. The show runs through Feb. 23. Visitors should use the entrance at Elizabeth St.

Poetry Reading at OWU (2/5)

On Wed., Feb. 5 (4 pm), Molly McCully will read some of her work in the Bayley Room of Beeghly Library. McCully is an award-winning poet who teaches at Kenyon College. She has had cerebral palsy since birth. A forthcoming prose collection is "Places I've Taken My Body" (2020).

Chamber of Commerce: Annual Dinner & Awards (2/6) – \$

The Delaware Area Chamber of Commerce will have its 2020 Annual Dinner & Awards night on Thurs., Feb. 6 (5-9 pm) at Hilton Columbus / Polaris at 8700 Lyra Dr. The reception & cash bar opens at 5 pm, dinner is served at 6:30 pm. Tickets are \$80 per person. Please RSVP by Jan. 23. – The Chamber promotes "a favorable business perspective and climate" for its members. This premier event is obviously not for salt-of-the-earth people who earn the new minimum wage of \$8.70 per hour.

First Friday (2/7)

First Friday in February is 2/7 (6-8 pm). By the deadline, Main Street Delaware has not yet announced the theme, but in 2019 it was "Love is in the Air." The popular Chocolate Walk has become a separate event.

OWU Trombone Recital (2/9)

Tony Weikel, trombone, will give a guest recital on Sun., Feb. 9 (3:15 pm) in Jemison Auditorium inside Sanborn Hall, 23 Elizabeth St. Weikel is an adjunct instructor at several regional universities and professionally plays in several orchestras. Free & open to the public.

High School Honor Band Festival (2/13)

The High School Honor Band Festival on Thurs., Feb. 13 (7:30-9 pm) features the OWU Symphonic Wind Ensemble & Hayes High School Wind Ensemble, conducted by faculty member Richard Edwards & Andy Doherty in Gray Chapel inside University Hall, 61 S. Sandusky St. Free & open to the public. – The concert is part of a 3-day band boot camp (Feb. 13-15) for Ohio high school students. The grand festival finale is Sat., Feb. 15 (2 pm), also in Gray Chapel.

OWU Performs "Eurydice" (2/13)

Sarah Ruhl's play "Eurydice" will be performed inside OWU's Chappellear Drama Center from Feb. 13-15 (8 pm) and Sun., Feb. 16 (2 pm). Directed by Bradford Sandler, the 2003 play tells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice from the woman's point of view and focuses on her choice to stay in the underworld or to return to earth. Tickets are

\$10; \$5 for seniors, students, and OWU staff; and free for OWU students with a valid student ID.

Valentine's Day (2/14)

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



"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

Lyrics by James Weldon Johnson,
Music by John J. Johnson (1900)

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise,
High as the listening skies,
let it resound loud as the rolling sea
Sing a song
full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song
full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun
of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days that hope
Unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet,
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come
over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come,
treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam
of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us
Thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by thy might,
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray
Lest our feet
Stray from the places, our god, where we met thee,
Lest our hearts,
drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee,
Shadowed beneath thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our god,
True to our native land

Corrections

The November 2019 issue of "Community Matters" reported that Reclaimology at 332 E. Winter St. would open very soon. At the end of December, however, the store was still closed. A peak in the windows indicated that the owners have a way to go before they are ready. – On the other hand, R&R Tires at 150 S. Sandusky St. finally opened after weeks and months of delays.

CITY OF DELAWARE

Fair Housing Information

On Dec. 30, Dianne L. Guenther from the City of Delaware conducted a Fair Housing Training Session at the Public Library. She is the designated Fair Housing Coordinator for the City, as mandated by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Jordan Selek from the City was also present.

The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discriminatory housing practices. It specifically includes race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or familial status. Ohio law also bans discrimination based on age or military status. Neither federal nor state law, however, prohibits discrimination against sexual orientation (LGBT), marital status, police records, pet ownership, and other categories. It is, of course, also legal for landlords to reject prospective tenants based on their credit history, rental history, job stability, and ability to pay the rent and the required deposit.

It is unlawful to refuse to rent to any of the protected classes; to tell a person that housing is not available when it is; to publish statements that indicate a preference or establish a limitation (e.g., "adults only" or "no mentally ill"); and more. The protections apply to all services related to housing, incl. appraisals, financing, and insurance. A 12-minute DVD entitled "Everyone Has the Right to Fair Housing," produced by the nonprofit HOPE Fair Housing Center, supplemented the presentation.

The short video mentioned "tests" and alluded to sting operations to determine whether landlords misrepresent the availability of vacancies or discriminate in other ways. The City of Delaware does not conduct such tests, according to Ms. Guenther. If and when tenants do suspect an act of discrimination, there is an appeals process. You may start with the Fair Housing Coordinator for the City, Dianne Guenther, at 1 S. Sandusky St. If you don't fully trust the City's Planning Dept. because of their warm relationship with developers, builders, and landlords, you can also take your complaint to the county and state level or contact the regional HUD office in Chicago. Detailed information is available from Ms. Guenther. Complaints must be filed within one (1) year of the alleged violation.

Please Keep Sidewalks Clear of Snow & Ice

Residents are reminded that Delaware's ordinances prohibit the accumulation of snow and ice on sidewalks. Please be a considerate neighbor and keep a clear path for school children, the elderly, dog walkers, and so on. Downtown businesses in particular must make every effort to keep their sidewalks free of snow and ice. Snow-removal vehicles often pile up snow on pedestrian ramps at intersections, creating insurmountable obstacles. Delaware's utility office should discourage them from doing so. It can be tough to be a pedestrian in winter. Many elderly people are even afraid to leave their home and are virtual prisoners. Unfortunately the police is not particularly interested in enforcing the law when it comes to walkability and bikeability in winter weather. Cars that sit in driveways and block public sidewalks are another good example. Despite the obvious risk of injury, they think they have more lucrative fish to fry such as handing out parking tickets.

City of Delaware in January

City Council meets Mon., Jan. 13 & 27 (7 pm). An additional work session dedicated to the U.S. 23 Corridor Study is scheduled for Mon., Jan. 6 (6:30 pm). The study provides a comprehensive look at the U.S. 23 corridor, both as a major transportation facility, critical to the movement of goods & services through Delaware County, and as a major factor in development. – Meetings of commissions, committees, and boards include: Board of Zoning Appeals (Wed., Jan. 8), Sister City Advisory Board (Tues., Jan. 14), Planning Commission (Wed., Jan. 15), Airport Commission (Thurs., Jan. 16), Historic Preservation Commission

(Wed., Jan. 22), and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (Thurs., Jan. 23). Please note the day change for Parks & Rec.! All meetings are held in City Hall (2nd floor), 1 S. Sandusky St. It is possible for meetings to get canceled due to a lack of agenda items or quorum, so always check the city's updated website beforehand (www.delawareohio.net).



Justin Nahvi Is Delaware's New Finance Director

The City of Delaware has selected Justin E. Nahvi as finance director to replace Dean Stelzer who is retiring after nearly 30 years. Nahvi, 40, has served as finance director of Marysville since 2016, which is also a fast-growing and full-service city. Since 2003, Nahvi has worked in various accounting, finance, and investing positions with Upper Arlington Public Library, Franklin County, and the Treasurer of State. Nahvi is a certified public accountant (CPA) with an MBA degree from Ohio Dominican Univ. To learn more, visit his LinkedIn profile. – Delaware is a city of 42,000 with an annual operating budget of \$71 million and a combined budget, with state & federal grants, of \$119.6 million.

According to the "Delaware Gazette" (12/28), the City of Delaware "announced" Nahvi's selection on Dec. 16. We are disturbed by the fact that there was no mention at the Dec. 19 meeting of City Council and, as of Dec. 28, no public communication whatsoever on the City's website and Facebook page. If it weren't for the Gazette, residents of Delaware would still be in the dark. This is not the first time that the City's communication is untimely and deficient. The last news release on the City's website is dated Aug. 26.

Christmas Tree Disposal

Curbside Christmas tree pick-up in Delaware runs from Mon., Jan. 6 through Fri., Jan. 31. Any remaining yard waste will also be picked up at this time. Please make sure that the stands and all ornaments are removed as trees will be recycled for mulching. Trees wrapped in plastic bags will not be accepted. Also, we have seen a couple of fake trees on the curbs; they will not be taken either.

Plane Crash at Delaware Municipal Airport

Waerl Haidar from Dublin suffered minor injuries at Delaware Municipal Airport on Pittsburgh Dr. when a single-engine airplane he was flying crashed and overturned on Dec. 20 in a field adjacent to the runway. The student pilot was practicing runway touch-and-go procedures, with his instructor watching from the ground. The cause of the crash is under investigation. The Delaware Municipal Airport, also known as Jim Moore Field, has a single runway that is 5,800 feet long and 100 feet wide. The distance is long enough for jet planes to land and take off. – The last crash at or near the airport seems to have occurred in 2010 when Delaware City Council member James ("Jim") Moore died in a plane crash. Other pilots have died en route to or from Jim Moore Field.

Judge David Sunderman Retires

Due to age limit, Municipal Judge David P. Sunderman retired at the end of last month. A retirement party for him was held Fri., Dec. 13. Born in Findlay, Ohio, he received his law degree from the Univ. of Toledo. He practiced law in Delaware County for 25 years was elected to Judge of the Delaware Municipal Court in Nov. 2001. – His successor is Kyle E. Rohrer, former Delaware County Assistant Prosecutor and Delaware City Council member. He defeated Melissa Riggins in the Republican primary with 55.6% to 44.4% and ran unopposed on the November ballot.

2020 Delaware Citizens Academy

The 2019 Delaware Citizens Academy took place Feb. 7 through June 10. The popular class, limited to 20 participants, is free and allows residents a look behind the curtains of the City of Delaware.

The dates for the 2020 Academy, the 11th, have not yet been announced, but they will be similar. The registration deadline was Feb. 1 last year and may be as early as Fri., Jan. 31 this year, so watch out for notifications on your water bill, the Delaware Gazette, and/or the City's website (www.delawareohio.net, under "Departments and Services," then "City Hall").

Common Ground Free Store Will Open Satellite

The Common Ground Free Store at 193 E. Central Ave. is about to open a satellite store at 425 S. Sandusky St., in a space provided by Press Church Outreach Center. The store will be open Saturdays from 10 am – 1 pm, starting in February, according to a story by Paul Comstock in This Week Delaware News (12/22). The Executive Director of Common Ground, Sharon Griner, estimates that about 2,000 families are provided frequent help. The store accepts and distributes gently used clothing and household items. It also accepts food items and serves meals, but the new location will only offer coffee and refreshments instead of full meals.

Arts Castle Offers Winter Classes

The Arts Castle at 190 W. Winter St. has released its 2019/20 winter program. It includes ceramics, dance & yoga, performing arts, fiber arts, music, drawing & painting, and culinary arts for children as well as a similar spectrum of classes & workshops for teenagers and adults. Most classes begin at the end of January or beginning of February, so there is time to sign up. To learn more, call 740.369.2787 or visit www.artscastle.com.

Power Outage on Christmas Eve

A widespread AEP power outage inconvenienced thousands of Delaware residents on Dec. 24. Power went down at about 10 am. Although it was restored at about 1 pm, the outage ruined holiday, family, and dinner plans for many locals. So far there has been no official word about what caused it. – The electrical grid in the U.S. is fragile and vulnerable. Blackouts due to storms, accidents, construction, or overload are such a common occurrence that many households have backup generators. In other industrialized countries power outages are unheard of.



A Place of Warmth

"A Place of Warmth" is now in its 5th season even though its founder, the Rev. Jon Peterson, passed away earlier this year. Zion Church of Christ at 51 W. Central Ave. offers homeless men a place to spend the night any time the temperature is predicted to drop to 20 degrees Fahrenheit or below. In December, this was the case several times. The center admits guests between the hours of 8 pm and 10 pm. A police officer is present to ensure everyone's safety. – Volunteers and donations are welcome to keep the project going.

Deliveries Vehicles Causing Problems

Around the nation, streets and roads are crammed with delivery vehicles. Gridlock is common in big cities. Even in residential areas, delivery trucks displaying the logos of USPS, UPS, FedEx, and Amazon are ubiquitous. In addition, many companies have their own fleet to deliver furniture, appliances, groceries, or prepared food. This has led to questions whether the existing infrastructure can handle the increased traffic. Questions about safety have also been raised. Most drivers act professionally and responsibly, but in Delaware you can also see a lot of young and reckless pizza deliverers who ignore the speed limit and traffic signals. In the gig economy, time is money.

Another problem of the growing e-commerce is theft. Packages are often left outside at the doorsteps. There are numerous reports of unscrupulous "porch pirates" who follow delivery trucks and steal what does not belong to them. Police recommend to use the signature-required delivery option, have packages delivered to work or neighbors, use a (real or fake) video camera, and/or install a lock box.

What Do the Utility Colors Mean?

Before digging, call 811 to have all underground utilities properly located and marked. The color of markings, flags, and/or paint stakes indicate what's buried below:

- yellow – gas / oil
- red – electric
- blue – water
- orange – communications / cable television
- green – sewers & drain lines
- purple – reclaimed water
- pink – temporary survey markings
- white – proposed excavation



MTSO News

The Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO) is holding an Admissions Open House on Tues., Jan. 14 (9 am – 2 pm). You can sit in a class, tour the campus & residence halls, attend chapel & explore financial options. Lunch is provided. To register for the event, visit www.mtso.edu.

Georgetown Univ. faculty member and ordained rabbi Julia Watts Belser will speak on "Reading Noah's Ark in the Age of Climate Change" on Tues., Feb. 25 (7 pm). She will address environmental ethics and the politics of survival. Additional lectures and special events will be listed in subsequent editions of Community Matters.

Lastly, MTSO has announced the appointment of Tejai Beulah as assistant prof. of history, ethics, and black church and African diaspora studies, effective July 1, 2020. Dr. Beulah earned her doctorate at Drew Univ. and has taught at MTSO as an adjunct prof. since 2015.

"The Epoch Times"

"The Epoch Times" has been spotted in a handful of local places, among them Christian-based "Choffey's" at 17 W. Winter St. The weekly paper was founded in 2000 by people associated with the anti-Chinese Falun Gong movement. That explains the peculiar obsession with "the damaging ideologies of communism and socialism" of the publication. In their eyes, even John Kasich is "a communist," according to the Columbus Dispatch (12/8), because the former governor has kept a healthy distance from President Trump. In recent years, the media outlet has given favorable coverage to the far right in America, France, and Germany and vociferously supported the election of President Trump. A recent edition celebrated "Second-Amendment Sanctuaries." In print and online "The Epoch Times" says it defends "truth" and tradition, but Facebook has recently reported that it has removed hundreds of fraudulent accounts with ties to the Epoch Media Group that were full of disinformation masqueraded as news and fake images generated by artificial intelligence. Twitter also confirmed that it has suspended 700 accounts linked to the network for inauthentic behavior, i.e., fake accounts and spam. "The Epoch Times" is indeed a curiosity, but please be aware that it is not a reputable publication that meets established journalistic standards.



Stratford's Farm Market

Stratford's Farm Market at 3083 Liberty Rd. is now plastic-free! The ecological center encourages you to bring your own reusable grocery bags when you come to purchase you-pick produce, grass-fed meats, or any other farm-market goodies. If you forget your own bag, no worries! Volunteers have been hard at work making reusable bags out of t-shirts. Please help yourself (donations

welcome)! – For sale are grass-fed beef & lamb (20% off through January), local Latshaw (raw) honey, maple syrup, and hand-made soap.



Kroger Distribution Center Builds Steel Erector

Kroger Great Lakes Distribution Center at 2000 Nutter Ln., off Rt. 36/37 East, is expanding. It is currently in process of building a huge, 120-foot-tall steel structure that will be part of a new, state-of-the-art robotic storage-and-retrieval system for dry goods. Neither Kroger provided an estimate how many jobs will be lost due to automation. Currently, Kroger employs about 900 people at the center, which opened in 2002.

OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY & HIGHER EDUCATION

Students Fearful about Their Future at OWU

OWU has done a miserable job reassuring students that their majors and minors are safe. In fact, as of December most students have not even heard that the university has cancelled all job searches and is in the process of reassessing and realigning faculty positions and academic programs. There has been no official communication, and the online student newspaper ("The Transcript") has inexplicably been silent as well. In many cases, however, students directly affected are wondering if they will be able to graduate with their declared majors and minors or if they should transfer elsewhere. In the words of a faculty member from one of the afflicted departments, "many students have fears about the future." In the absence of solid information, false rumors and conspiracy theories tend to flourish: "I heard they are going to axe the xyz department." Nobody knows yet the outcome of the comprehensive review process, to be undertaken this spring and summer. However, it seems urgent to open up a communication line with anxious students and to assure them that whatever happens they will be able to graduate on time, and with their chosen majors and minors. That is a commitment that the university must honor.

United Methodist Church and OWU

The United Methodist Church, with which OWU has had "an active affiliation" since 1842, continues to oppose same-sex marriages. The church's official dogma is that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching." For the same reason, it also forbids the ordination of gay people as priests and bishops. In 2019, the church doubled down on its discriminatory stance, voting to uphold and even strengthen these prohibitions. That "Traditional Plan" took effect Jan. 1, 2020. As a result, many churches and UMC-affiliated colleges are now expected to disaffiliate themselves from the church. Some are waiting to see what happens at the 2020 global General Conference in Minneapolis (May 5-15) where 862 delegates from around the world meet. Several plans are being studied, incl. the UMNNext Plan that wants to keep the denomination together and is striving for a compromise. However, many fear that an open schism is inevitable. Over the course of its history, UMC has gone through such schisms at least a dozen times, notably over the issue of slavery, so this would not be unprecedented.

Regardless of what happens, OWU's Board of Trustees and OWU's president Rock Jones remain unwavering in their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus and have approved statements and resolutions that oppose UMC's discriminatory practices against LGBTQIA+ people. The leadership is hopeful that "a new form of Methodism" can be found that is fully inclusive of all marginalized

groups. OWU documents also make it very clear that the church does not govern, fund, or set policies for the institution, which is independent. While the church may have abandoned its slogan, OWU remains true to it: "Open hearts, open minds, open doors."

Update: UMC leaders have announced a plan to split the church. Under an agreement, a new traditionalist Methodist denomination would be created that would continue to ban same-sex marriage and gay/lesbian clergy. The plan must be approved at the May conference before it takes effect. Details of the proposed 9-page proposal are not yet available, but it appears that it is the Traditionalists who will "leave" the official church rather than the liberals. This is an important legal distinction because it will affect church institutions, assets, pension plans, and so on. All churches involved can keep their local property. In addition, the plan pledged to provide \$25 million over the next 4 years to the new traditionalist spin-off. If that information and interpretation is correct and the plan approved in Minneapolis, little will change for OWU, other institutions of higher learning, and most Methodist churches. However, the word "united" may have to be stricken from the names of many.

The Shakespeare Club of Delaware, Ohio

Delaware's Shakespeare Club was founded in 1878 and may be the oldest in the country. It continues to meet on a monthly basis, usually at the private residence of one of the members. The meetings often have a theme and include a presentation, but in between there are also informal gatherings and picnics. In December, the club held a well-attended Christmas Banquet at First Presbyterian Church. Future meetings are planned for Jan. 1, Feb. 13, Mar. 12, Apr. 9, and May 14. Many of the current members are affiliated with Ohio Wesleyan Univ., but the club is open to the entire community. Dennis Prindle (djprindle@owu.edu) and Alison Prindle (aprinde@otterbein.edu) serve as co-chairs of the group. The 2019/20 season is dedicated to Jeannie ("Dusky") Reider (1929-2019), a former club member and 1951 OWU graduate whose theater troupe introduced thousands of students to William Shakespeare.

OWU's Lifelong Learning Institute

Ohio Wesleyan Univ. is offering another session of its popular Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) to Delaware County residents age 55 and older. For a flat fee of \$75, interested individuals can take as many of the courses below as they wish. The courses include no tests or term papers. Registration begins Jan. 15. The 6-week program extends from March 16 through April 25.

The program features over a dozen courses and/or lecture & workshop series. Among the topics are "Women of Hitchcock," "DNA & Genealogy," "Health-Care Reform," "Healthy U," "Immigrants & Refugees," "Technology Skills for 2020," "Chess," "The U.S. Constitution," and more. Among the lecture series are "Science in Action," "My Favorite Lecture," an "LLI Evening" speaker series, and a workshop taught by the Master Gardeners. For specific days and times, please visit www.owu.edu/LLI or contact Debbie Lewis (740-368-3078 or dslewis@owu.edu) beginning Jan. 15. Posters will be available soon.

Upcoming English Department Events

OWU's English Dept. has announced some upcoming events on its public Facebook page. All are free & open to the public.

1. On Wed., Feb. 5 (4 pm), Molly McCully will read some of her work in the Bayley Room of Beeghly Library. McCully is an award-winning poet who teaches at Kenyon College. She has had cerebral palsy since birth. A forthcoming prose collection is "Places I've Taken My Body" (2020).

2. On Tues., March 3 (4 pm), Ben Lerner will present the annual Carpenter Lecture in Merrick Hall #301. He is an acclaimed poet and novelist, essayist and critic. His latest novel, "The Topeka School," was one of the top 10 novels of the year 2019.

3. On Wed., March 25, Charles Bernstein will conduct a poetry reading and accept an honorary degree from OWU. A location has not yet been announced. Bernstein, born in 1950, is a groundbreaking and influential poet, editor, critic, and activist.

Lecture Series at OWU's Perkins Observatory

OWU's Perkins Observatory at 3199 Columbus Pike (US 23 S) will once again host a monthly lecture series in 2020, "New Vistas in Astronomy." Experts from OWU and OSU will share the latest space-

related news & research. Attendees also will be able to observe celestial bodies through the observatory's 32-inch Schottland reflecting telescope, sky conditions permitting. Cost for the entire adult lecture series is \$80. Individual lectures are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. To purchase tickets, visit www.owu.edu/perkins or call the observatory at (740) 363-1257. Below is the list of upcoming speakers & topics for the 2020 lecture series. Talks are held on Thursdays and start at 8 pm:

Jan. 23 – "Extraterrestrial Lives: Phosphorus" by Sultana Nahar

Feb. 13 – "Why Do People Believe Nonsensical Things about the Universe?" by Don Terndrup

Mar. 12 – "The Habitable Exoplanet Observatory" by Scott Gaudi

Apr. 9 – "Willy Fowler & the Nucleus of Carbon" by Jennifer Johnson

May 14 – "Gas Beyond Galaxies" by David Weinberg

June 11 – "Breadcrumbs in the Lyman Alpha Forest" by Paul Martini

July 16 – "Welcome Our New Robot Masters: A Robotic Fiber Positioner System for Sloan Digital Sky Survey V" by Rick Pogge

Aug. 13 – "Intensity Mapping the Multiwavelength" by Sky Yi-Kuan Chiang

Sept. 10 – "Einstein, Friedmann & the Expanding Universe Smackdown" by Barbara Ryden

Oct. 8 – To be announced

Nov. 12 – To be announced

Dec. 10 – To be announced

OWU Receives Tax Credits to Rehab Former Fraternity Building

The State of Ohio has awarded a total of \$24.6 million in Historic Preservation Tax Credits to renovate 24 buildings across the state. Six of the projects are located in Columbus and Central Ohio, incl. one in Delaware. OWU has received \$764,672 for a \$7.7 million project to rehabilitate Phi Theta Delta House at 19 Williams Dr. and to convert it into student housing. This is part of a broader effort to modernize existing student housing on campus and to replace several older structures with new ones. It is the university's hope that a revitalized campus will help with student recruitment and retention.



Sean Kay: Grand Canyon River Guide

OWU politics & government professor Sean Kay is a man with many talents. In addition to being the author of 5 books, he is also an accomplished singer and guitarist as well as an avid kayaker and environmentalist. He is currently researching grassroots movements for river conservation in the U.S. and abroad. – Last summer, Kay worked as a river guide for Arizona Raft Adventures (AZRA) in the Grand Canyon, following in the footsteps of his father, David Kay (1943-2016), who co-founded California's Friends of the River, managed the American River Touring Association (ARTA) in the 1970s, and helped develop a new ethic of river conservation. Although his father has since passed away, "David Kay's work shaped my life and resonates in places I least expect," Sean Kay writes in a piece just published in "Boatman's Quarterly Review," the magazine of Grand Canyon River Guides (www.gcrq.org). The 3-page essay not only captures the river-rafting experience in the Grand Canyon, but it is also a deep conversation with his late father about the proper balance between environmental ethics and commercial use of the Colorado River. In addition, it includes profound insights into what rivers can teach us about life: "love and loss, excitement and fear, courage and peace, We learn to anticipate and avoid obstacles, moving around and not get stuck on things, and, when necessary, hit the big ones head on."

OWU Alumnus Richard North Patterson '68

The New York Times (12/22) has discovered what locals knew 2 years ago and "Community Matters" described in detail in its June 2018 issue. OWU alumnus Richard North Patterson '68, now 72, has given up writing thrillers and has begun to focus on writing

political opinion pieces in the age of Trump. In long articles in the *Bulwark*, a digital current-affairs magazine that explores middle ground, Patterson notes that reality has become stranger than fiction. Today there is much confusion between what is real and what is not. Patterson has also written for *HuffPost* and for *Boston Globe*. He published a first compilation of articles in his first nonfiction book, "Swamp Fever" (2017). Patterson is no outsider to power and politics. He was close to former President George W. H. Bush and to Senators Ted Kennedy and John McCain. As a trained lawyer, he has a unique perspective on Donald Trump and is both fascinated and repulsed by the president's psychology. In his 2018 campus speech, Patterson said that he would like to see the country return to centrist values such as truth, trust, tolerance, mutual respect, decency, justice, integrity, ethics, logic, and democracy. Indeed, these are values that OWU has attempted to instill in its students since its founding in 1842, more than 175 years ago.

Rollin T. Kearns (1937-2019)

Former Religion professor Rev. Dr. Rollin Thompson Kearns died Dec. 4 at the age 82 in Tübingen, Germany. Born in Pennsylvania as the son of Bishop Francis E. Kearns (1905-1992), he grew up in Wisconsin and graduated from high school in 1955 and from Harvard Univ. in 1959. A Rotary Scholarship allowed him to study theology and languages in the German university cities of Marburg, Göttingen, and Tübingen. He joined Ohio Wesleyan in 1966 where he taught until he retired in 2010. He received his Ph.D. from the Univ. of Tübingen in 1974 with a dissertation on the question whether Jesus Christ was "the son of man" and/or "the son of God." Kearns published widely in the field of Christology, but it is all in German. His official obituary does not say so, but as long as his colleagues remember he held a split appointment between Delaware and Tübingen, spending ½ of the year in the U.S. and the other ½ in Germany. Kearns struggled with Alzheimer's for the last 5 years of his life. His wife Heidi Kugler Kearns survives. – For more intriguing details, consult the biography OWU professor Blake Michael produced in 2010 on the occasion of Kearns' retirement. He mentions, for example, that he translated works by the influential German theologian Martin Hempel into English and also that he played first violin in the Central Ohio Symphony in its early years.

Museums in Delaware

Delaware is not known for its museums, i.e., dedicated spaces for the systematic collection of artifacts. However, there are some. First and foremost, there is OWU's **Richard M. Ross Art Museum**, located at 60 S. Sandusky St. It houses a permanent collection of more than 2,500 artifacts. Several times a year it hosts new exhibitions in the main building as well as in galleries inside nearby Beeghly Library and Mowry Hall. In addition, there are frequent receptions, lectures, workshops, concerts, and the like. During the academic year, the museum is open daily except Sat. and Mon. For more info, incl. upcoming events, visit www.owu.edu/ross.

Most residents have probably never heard of it, but OWU also has a small natural history Museum, located on the ground floor of SCSC Science Center. **The Brant Museum of Zoology** houses a teaching collection of over 400 mounted birds as well as mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and various additional artifacts. Occasionally, K-12 teachers bring their classes, but few members of the public know of the place. The museum has irregular hours, it seems, but it is often open during school days. There is no admission. More info about its 150-old history is available on the website of OWU.

The Delaware County Historical Society (DCHS) owns and operates a number of facilities, incl. **Meeker Homestead Museum** at 2690 Stratford Rd. Exhibitions vary, but a display devoted to American Indians is a permanent feature. The museum is normally open Sundays from 2-5 pm, but it now closed until March. Admission is free, but a donation of \$5 is suggested. Visit www.delawareohiohistory.org for more info.

To be sure, there are additional spaces that contain public art, murals, and historic items. For example, OWU also has an archive inside Beeghly Library that is dedicated to the history of Methodism. And not many people know that OWU's Junior League (OWjL) summer program houses a large collection of owl figurines in the basement of University Hall. In addition, there are also plenty of private collections of memorabilia that that might be called micro museums. People acquire all kinds of collectibles – dolls, coins, stamps, sports items, rare

books, fountain pens, autographs, typewriters, musical instruments, beer coasters, keys, knives, toy cars, fishing gear, and so on. Knowing the right person might open the door to one of these "tiny" museums.

Otterbein University

Otterbein Univ., founded in 1847, is a private institution located in Westerville, Ohio. With 2,400 undergraduate students as well as 500 graduate students, it is twice as big as Ohio Wesleyan Univ. in Delaware. In addition to the baccalaureate degree, it has 6 master's programs (e.g., an MBA program) and even a doctorate program in nursing practice. Its equine-science program is unique among colleges and universities. It is also clear even to a casual observer that Otterbein's cultural life is rich and diverse in the areas of literature, music, theater, and the fine arts. Otterbein not only strives to be an inclusive community, but it is also committed to pursuing the ideal of environmental sustainability. – Representatives from liberal-arts colleges sometimes say, "We don't want to be Otterbein." By that they mean the preservation of the liberal-arts tradition in its pure, abstract form with little connection to the real world. It seems to us, however, that through its Integrative Studies curriculum forward-thinking Otterbein Univ. has successfully blended the liberal arts with professional studies and is doing very well for itself. The liberal arts are as strong at Otterbein as they are at OWU. To learn more, visit www.otterbein.edu.

Tenure Denial at Harvard

Denying a professor specializing in Latinx and Caribbean Studies tenure has led to an outcry at Harvard Univ. Although Dr. Lorgia García Peña had the unanimous support of her students and the Romance Languages & Literatures Dept., an anonymous committee of "experts" denied her tenure. Tenure decisions are shrouded in secrecy and are often based on factors that have little to do with merit. In this case, too, the decision seems to have been driven by racism and sexism. The backlash at Harvard was fierce. Underrepresented students in particular pointed out that this is part of a systemic pattern: minority students, faculty, and staff are lured to institutions of higher education to that they can brag about how diverse and inclusive they are, but upon arrival underrepresented groups discover a stark lack of visibility, support, and resources.

García Peña has many academic accomplishments, incl. a book on the Dominican culture, but she was also focused on helping students like her feel at home at Harvard. Being a good teacher and mentor can often backfire. Teaching awards are widely considered to be the "kiss of death" because of the perception that the person in question is not a serious scholar. There is also entrenched bias against non-traditional research fields such as ethnic studies. The situation is similar throughout the U.S., incl. at OWU. Studies have shown that women and minority faculty are often saddled with all sorts of extra work. OWU is typical in this respect as well: the hard work of interacting with students before they arrive on campus, during their stay, and after they graduate remains largely unacknowledged and unrewarded. Advising, mentoring, and supporting students does not factor into tenure decisions. The many hours faculty spend writing meaningful letters of recommendation for graduate school, the job market, and scholarships & grants on behalf of students account for absolutely nothing. The same is true for academic advising, which a few years ago the university deliberately disqualified from quantitative consideration. OWU prides itself of being "a community of teachers and students" and for being an institution devoted to "teaching and learning," but in actuality the tenure & promotion process is as broken that of Harvard and is undermining the university's effort to diversify the faculty.

CHESS CORNER

Hanging Pawns Chess Club

The "Hanging Pawns" chess club meets every Saturday morning and afternoon at Choffey's, a local coffee shop at 17 W. Winter St. Players of all levels are welcome. Equipment is provided.

Chess Taught at OWU's LLI Institute

Local chess player, USCF member, and USCF tournament director Richard Vail will teach an introductory course entitled "Chess: The Game, the History, the Culture" as part of OWU's Lifelong

Learning Institute this spring. The 6-weeks course runs from March 16 through April 25 and will be taught Thursday mornings from 10 am – 12 pm. The course is intended for beginners and will not be too technical and challenging. All equipment will be provided. Registration begins Jan. 15. For a flat fee of \$75 adults 55 and older can take as many LLI courses as they wish. To learn more, visit www.owu.edu/lli.

Meet the Chess Queen

The queen is the strongest piece on the chessboard. She can move horizontally, vertically, and diagonally in any direction. If you lose her without adequate compensation, you might as well resign. However, the queen has not always been a king's fiercest warrior and protector. In fact, there were centuries when she did not even exist. Marilyn Yalom wrote a whole book on the subject, "Birth of the Chess Queen" (2004), in which she documents the emergence of the queen as an icon of female power. Alas, to Yalom's chagrin women remain underrepresented in the game of chess. Yalom, a prolific feminist author and cultural historian, recently passed away at the age of 87.

Magnus Carlsen, the Greatest Chess Player

The greatest chess player today, and perhaps of all times, is Magnus Carlsen from Tønsberg, Norway. Born in 1990, he is now 29. He was a child prodigy, became world champion as a 22-year-old in 2013, and has defended his title several times since against other premier players such as Anand, Caruana, and Karjakin. Carlsen is also the world rapid chess and the world blitz chess champion. The "Magnus effect" has led to a chess boom in Norway similar to the Bobby Fisher effect in the U.S. in the 1970s. Below is one of Carlsen's games. Remarkably, he was only 13 years old when he beat Russian grandmaster Sergey Dolmatov in just 19 moves. The game shows determination, courage, and imagination on Carlsen's part. Black's rooks never saw any action.

Zuckertort Opening (Dutch Variation)

White: Carlsen, Black: Dolmatov (2004)

1. Nf3 f5 2. d3 d6 3. e4 e5 4. Nc3 Nc6 5. exf5 Bxf5 6. d4 Nxd4 7. Nxd4 exd4 8. Qxd4 Nf6 9. Bc4 c6 10. Bg5 b5 11. Bb3 Be7 12. 0-0-0 Qd7 13. Rhe1 Kd8 14. Rxe7 Qxe7 15. Qf4 Bd7 16. Ne4 d5 17. Nxf6 h6 18. Bh4 g5 19. Qd4 (black resigns)

DELAWARE COUNTY & CENTRAL OHIO



Alaina Shearer Kicks Off Political Campaign

Alaina Shearer (D) from Liberty Township has kicked off her campaign to run for Ohio's 12th Congressional District on March 17, 2020 in Delaware. The Republican opponent on Nov. 3 will be incumbent Troy Balderson (R) of Zanesville. Even though Alaina Shearer, 40, lives in Liberty Township, just outside Powell, she is at heart a townie from Delaware. She was born here, and her first memories are of downtown Delaware, she says. Her father was a physician, and her mother owned the downtown "Essentials" store. She graduated from Ohio Univ. with a B.A. in 2001 and worked as a journalist before raising her family and starting her own digital business. You can find much more information on her website, www.alaina2020.com. As far as her political positions are concerned, the site lists equality for women, paid family leave, and health care. According to the Columbus Dispatch (10/24) she has been in touch with Emily's List, which supports women's rights. Shearer is from a gun-owning family, she says, but as a mother of 4 school-age children she is also worried about mass shootings and therefore supports stricter background checks. In addition, she has stated that her kids are alarmed by the effects of climate change and that more needs to be done about it. As a successful businesswoman, she is also eager to overcome division and to bring people together.

Shearer is adamant about conducting a positive campaign, but her opponent Troy Balderson, whom President Trump supports, is known to have used negative misinformation about rivals in the past. This will be an uphill battle for whichever Democrat wins the primary, but there is always hope that truth, positivity, and decency will win the day. In 2018, Balderson beat Democrat Danny O'Connor by a close 51% to 47% margin. It is not inconceivable that the district will flip this time around.

Rachael Morocco Is Running for District 67

Rachael Morocco is running for Ohio State Rep. of District 67, in western Delaware County. Her Republican opponent on Nov. 3 will be Kris Jordan from Ostrander. Morocco was born and raised in the Cleveland area, has her bachelor's degree from Mt. Union College and her medical degree from Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine. She is currently a pediatrician at Nationwide Children's Hospital and a professor at OSU. She and her husband, Frank, live in Lewis Center with their two young sons. On her website and Facebook page she says that as a physician she can only help one patient at a time. As a state representative, she would have a greater impact on issues such as affordable health care, childcare, and the educational system. Here are some of her priorities: "I believe we can agree across the aisle on some key goals, including: More honesty and integrity in the government, Stronger schools and better school funding, More affordable college and job training, Lower health care costs and better access to quality care, More opportunity for all who need it, Focus on keeping our communities safe, Reduced risk of gun violence in our schools and communities, Upgraded infrastructure with reduced congestion as our communities grow." More information can be found at her website, www.rachaelmorocco.com.

Steve Mount Is Running for District 68

According to the Delaware County Board of Elections, Steven F. Mount from Westerville has filed to run against Republican Rick Carfagna on Nov. 3, 2020. We have so far not been able to meet Steve Mount or learn much about him. It seems the 66-year-old lawyer has a BA degree from Muskingum College and a law degree from Harvard Univ. (1979). – The 68th District encompasses the eastern half of Delaware County.

Ohio Farm Bureau Names New Director

The Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) has named a new organization director for Delaware, Franklin, Madison, and Union counties – Melinda Lee of Tipp City. She has served in a similar capacity for a group of other Ohio counties in the past. Lee is a 2013 graduate of OSU where she majored in agriculture and animal science. She received her American FFA degree in 2010. In addition to her new job, she continues to help out on her family's beef, sheep, and grain farm in Cardington. Visit ofbf.org to learn more about the mission of the Ohio Farm Bureau.

Michael Ringle Will Not Run

After Jon Peterson's untimely death, Michael Ringle was appointed Delaware County Treasurer through the end of the unexpired term. He was picked by the Central Committee of the Delaware County Republican Party over Donald Rankey, a businessman from Powell. In an interesting new development, Ringle has now announced that he does not plan to run on the March 17 Republican primary ballot. Rankey, however, has filed to run. Apparently, Republican leaders have decided that a contested primary might be too "divisive." Since there is no Democratic candidate in the race, Rankey is set to be Delaware County's next treasurer. Besides owning his own business, he is also serving as treasurer for the Delaware County Finance Authority.



NAMI Offers ArtFun Fridays

NAMI of Delaware and Morrow Counties offers a "Community Potluck and ArtFun Fridays" on the 3rd Friday of each month at 814 Bowtown Rd. Each month will have a different potluck

theme and art activity. The theme for the Jan. 17 meeting (6-9 pm) is "Comfort Foods and Vision Boards." Please bring a dish to share and serving utensils. Absolutely no art experience is necessary. Instruction and materials will be provided. Please RSVP at www.namiofdel-mor.org/art.



Programs in 2020

Unless noted otherwise, all events take place at the Barn at Stratford, 2690 Stratford Rd., and start at 7 pm. They are free & open to the public, but donations are accepted.

Delaware County's Last Covered Bridge – presented by David Simmons (Wed., Jan. 15);
Hidden Communities: African Americans in Ohio – presented by Dr. Ric Sheffield from Kenyon College (Wed., Feb. 19);
History of the Columbus Zoo – presented by Shelia Chambers (Wed., March 18);
Methodist Theological School in Ohio: Founding and History – presented by Benjamin Hall, and Drs. Jeff Jaynes & Diane Lobody (Wed., April 15, 7 pm, at MTSO, 3081 Columbus Pike);
Archaeology in the Olentangy River Valley (Stratford Area) – presented by Dr. Jarrod Burks (Wed., May 6 pm);
A Pioneer Woman's Journey: Irene Carpenter – presented by Sherry Carmichael (Wed., June 17 pm);
Remember the Ladies: 1850's Women's Rights Convention in Salem, Ohio – presented by Cathy Nelson, in partnership with the Delaware County League of Women Voters (Wed., Aug. 26);
Oak Grove Cemetery Walk: Reenactors will portray notable county residents who were buried there (Sun., Oct. 11, 1 pm, ticketed event);
Delaware County Historical Society Annual Meeting: Iconic Delaware County TV and Radio personalities from the 1950s to the 1990s – presented by Brent Carson & special guests (Wed., Nov. 18 pm);
Nash House Holiday Open House (Dec. 5-6, 157 E. William St.).

Preservation Parks Receives Grant

Preservation Parks of Delaware County (PPDC) is excited to announce that it received a 2019 Clean Ohio Trail Fund Grant from ODNR for \$500,000! This will allow the organization to design and construct another 2.25 miles of the Ohio-to-Erie Trail northeast of Sunbury. In addition, Preservation Parks will apply for a 2020 Clean Ohio Trail Fund grant to pave another 1.4 miles in 2021. As part of that grant, PPDC is holding a public open house on Tues., Jan. 14th at 7:00 at the Sunbury Village Hall to review the trail project and receive public feedback on the plans. The public is welcome attend.

Recreation Unlimited Has New Boat House & Canoe Launch

Recreation Unlimited at 7700 Piper Rd. in Ashley is a facility for individuals with disabilities and health concerns. It now has a new boat house and canoe launch at Lake Crum. Through grant funding, Recreation Unlimited acquired a power Hoyer lift system that will be used to safely transfer individuals with disabilities from their wheelchairs into the canoes. Campers who never were able to canoe before now have the experience of what it is like to be on the water. (Visit www.recreationunlimited.org for more info.)

2019 Delaware Reservoir Christmas Bird Count by Dr. Rich Bradley

We had cool (28-32°F) and gloomy (overcast) weather on the count day, water relatively high, with plenty of open water, only partly frozen

on lakes / ponds. Wind varied from calm to 14 mph. A total of 42 observers participated (38 in field parties and 4 watching feeders). We detected a somewhat low diversity of waterfowl, but there was a Common Goldeneye seen by both Jim Peoples' eastern shores group as well as Dan Bobb's western shores group. The western shores group also saw a single Ring-necked Duck. Ben Warner and Lauren Blyth had a good group of American Black Ducks (35) as well as 240 Mallards and 2 likely Am. Black Duck / Mallard hybrids. A total of 65 Tundra Swans were reported, by far the highest number ever for this count (previous high 11 in 2013), but the pair of Trumpeter Swans spotted earlier in the week failed to show for the count day. We tallied a record high 111 Red-bellied Woodpeckers. This year more parties reported Pileated Woodpeckers than ever before (12 individual birds, by 6 parties). We tallied the 2nd-lowest number of Horned Larks ever (40). The only lower year was back in 2014 when 37 were seen. Open fields were snow-free, and in these conditions few are seen because they are so inconspicuous, perfectly matching their preferred background habitat. The total of 127 Eastern Bluebirds reported just nudged out our record high last year of 126. Both recent years are well above our average of 54 individuals. As was true last year, relatively few sparrows were seen by most groups (esp. American Tree Sparrows). Some groups reported reasonable numbers of American Tree Sparrows, but many groups reported few or even none. The total (171) is the 2nd-lowest ever. There were 12 lingering Field Sparrows and even one Chipping Sparrow, both unusual in winter. For the second year in a row we saw many White-Breasted Nuthatches (125), compared to the average of 75. We detected a paucity of Blackbirds, considering that it wasn't all that cold. Craig Flockert's Alum Creek north, and Dan Fink's Eastern Shores north groups both had single Red-winged Blackbirds, and Kirsten Lehtoma's Refuge North group had a single Eastern Meadowlark. No groups reported Cowbirds or Grackles. Our total of 40 Carolina Wrens was above the average of 29 but well below our high of 87 last year. In addition to the Trumpeter Swans mentioned above, Wild Turkeys and Lapland Longspurs were detected during the "count week," but not on the count day. – Our final total was 60 species, equal to our overall average, with 8,788 individuals. That number was well below the average of 12,553 individuals. I thank everyone for their effort in conducting this annual census and hope you enjoyed the day.

Dr. Rich Bradley is a retired OSU Zoology professor and Delaware resident. After the death of Dr. Jed Burt in 2016 he took over responsibility for the annual Delaware Reservoir Christmas Bird Count. In an email, he explained that the local count is part of a large international effort sponsored by the National Audubon Society. There are 68 counts conducted in Ohio each year and over 2,600 counts overall, mostly in North America, but each year more and more are done in Central and South America. Each count surveys a 15-mile diameter circle. The local count was conducted on Sunday, Dec. 15. There were 42 participants.

Understandably, a true birder gets more excited about the single sight of a rare species than 1,000 starlings or 500 geese. So, here is a tally of the birds where 100 or more individuals were documented: E. Starling (1,828), Am. Robin (947), House Sparrow (649), Mourning Dove (604), Canada Goose (511), Mallard (365), Dark-Eyed Junco (324), N. Cardinal (310), Rock Pigeon (290), Blue Jay (282), Am. Goldfinch (209), House Finch (182), Bonaparte's Gull (175), Am. Tree Sparrow (171), Ring-Billed Gull (150), Am. Crow (147), E. Bluebird (127), White-Breasted Nuthatch (125), Song Sparrow (123), Cedar Waxwing (121), Red-Bellied Woodpecker (111), and Downy Woodpecker (105).

Muslim Family Accosted at Easton

A family of Palestinian heritage was recently accosted by a white male at Sam's Club at 3950 Morse Rd., across from Easton. The man told the family to back to where they came from and said, "I'm going to find you, I'm going to put a bullet in your (expletive) head, I'm going to kill you." The perpetrator's identity was established through photographs and his license-plate number. However, the police did not press charges. Columbus police protocol is not to file "misdemeanor" charges in such matters unless the act is witnessed by police, Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien, a Republican, stated. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and other

groups were outraged by this cavalier attitude that makes light of hate speech. Most people will agree that the threat to kill someone based on ethnicity is a potential hate crime and more serious than a misdemeanor. A spokesperson for CAIR declared, "The alleged perpetrator needs to be arrested and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law for this racist and xenophobic attack. Nobody should be intimidated, threatened or made to feel unsafe for simply belonging to an ethnic and religious minority."

Hotels Implicated in Human Trafficking

Presenters at human-trafficking workshops routinely point out that for a variety of reasons the state of Ohio is one of the busiest hubs for sex- and labor-trafficking in the nation. An Ohio woman has now filed a federal lawsuit in Columbus that could end up having national implications. Homeless and out of work, she was forced to have sex for money at several hotels in the Columbus area. She was tied to a bed as numerous men entered the room, paying cash for sex with her. Despite obvious signs and the woman's desperate pleas for help, the hotel staff did nothing to intervene. Several other lawsuits filed in Ohio and many cases pending across the country describe similar scenarios: women trapped in hotel rooms, sometimes screaming for help, and forced to have sex against their will. Plaintiffs in multiple federal cases allege Best Western, Red Roof Inns, Hilton, Marriott, Wyndham, and other hotel chains enabled human trafficking and profited from it. Some of the defendants are in denial. Other are seeking dismissals for lack of sufficient knowledge.

The Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association and the American Hotel & Lodging Association say that they are taking the accusations seriously and working hard to combat the crime of human trafficking through increased training and security measures. The industry denies that it is turning a blind eye to the problem. They probably speak the truth, but what's actually happening in the guest rooms is normally outside their view. And no doubt there are instances when franchise owners, often foreign-born individuals, are more concerned about full occupancy than the health and well-being of their guests.

Dublin May Regulate Airbnb Rentals

The City of Dublin is joining other municipalities that want to regulate short-term property rentals through services such as Airbnb and HomeAway. On Jan. 6, Dublin City Council will consider a proposal to limit rentals to 14 nights a year. Property owners would have to register with the city and submit a form for each rental. Typically, they also need liability insurance and meet additional onerous red-tape conditions. Guests may not like the fact that their personal information will be disclosed. If enacted, the city also would have the right to inspect the rental units to ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local rules and regulations. – Airbnb rentals and similar services are popular among renters and guests. The proposed legislation is likely to meet a lot of resistance in the community. A fight is likely. It should also be noted that the American Hotel and Lodging Association has exerted a lot of pressure on elected officials to rein in Airbnb rentals because don't like the unwanted competition. Their interest is not to protect consumers but to protect themselves. In some out-of-state instances, city council members have received thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from the industry. It will be interesting to see what balance the City of Dublin is going to strike.

Police Uses Force Disproportionately against Black Males

Matrix Consulting Group, a California firm hired by the City of Columbus, has concluded that there is "a significant disparity of use of force against minority residents" within the Columbus Police Dept. The report states that 51% of the people whom Columbus police officers use force against are black, though only 28% of the city's population are black. There is "a clear and discernible disparity," the report concludes. – An internal Police Division report came to a similar conclusion: "It is clear that males and blacks make up a greater number of use-of-force recipients as well as arrests," it admits. Nearly 55% of the time force was used, it was against a person of color, and more than 60% of all arrests in the city for 2018 were of people identifying or described as black. However, the internal report insists that "context" is needed to understand these figures. For instance, it says it is inaccurate to use population demographics at large. Instead, it is supposedly more accurate to compare use-of-force demographics to the population with whom the officers are making contact with:

suspects and arrestees. Overall, police are more likely to encounter black males as "suspects." That may well be true, but the fact is that this is the result of implicit police bias: in the eyes of law enforcement, a black male is always more "suspect" than a white male, which leads to more interactions with people of color. Another bias may be at work as well. Police presence is typically heavier in black neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods. Even within the City of Delaware black residents often comment that at "white" events there always seem to be fewer police officers present compared to "black" events.

Columbus Picks Thomas Quinlan

Thomas Quinlan will be the City of Columbus' next police chief, replacing former chief Kim Jacobs who retired in February. Quinlan was picked over Perry Tarrant, an African-American outsider whom many favored as a truly transformational agent of positive change. Quinlan, 53, is white and a 30-year veteran of CPD. Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther emphasized during his announcement on Dec. 17 that he expects Quinlan to effectively address racism in the city and within the police division. He said "solid strides" have already been made, but that progress must continue. Quinlan has promised not to tolerate racism or discrimination and has stated that diversity within the recruit classes was a priority for him.

Faith leaders throughout the city expressed profound disappointment over Ginther's choice. "It's a continuation of the same old repressive regime," the Rev. Jeffery Kee said in a press release. Lt. Melissa McFadden, who has a federal lawsuit pending against the CPD, said, "This was an opportunity for Mayor Ginther to send a message that the culture of racism, sexism, and retaliation against female and minority officers will not be tolerated or rewarded, but in choosing the internal candidate he solidified the status quo." On the other hand, Keith Ferrell, president of the entrenched Fraternal Order of Police Capital City Lodger No. 9, welcomed the end of uncertainty and expressed his satisfaction over the choice of Quinlan. The police union was opposed to a national search to begin with, preferring to leave things unchanged. Ginther's decision amounts to a capitulation to the powerful police union, but the mayor also made it clear in his announcement that without on-going "change" and "progress" Quinlan may not last long in his new position.

Over 100 Homicides in Columbus

As of Dec. 30, there were 104 homicides in the City of Columbus in 2019. 80% of them were the result of shootings. The Columbus Dispatch (12/31) reports that the police division is eager to prevent as many homicides as possible and is employing "new techniques." Unfortunately, the lengthy articles not say what these new techniques are to fight "street justice" and felonious assaults other than getting illegal guns off the street before they are used in a homicide and appealing to the public to cooperate with the police. These initiatives are "new." – However, the article does provide an interesting piece of information in a related area. The National Center for Homicide Research estimates that each homicide results in a financial impact of \$17.25 million. That includes the costs associated with the criminal-justice system, loss of future income, and social services for surviving family members. Based on these estimates, Columbus has suffered a financial loss of about \$6 to \$7 billion due to the more than 370 homicides that have occurred since 2017.

COTA Increases Operating Budget

The 2020 operating budget for The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) is \$170 million, an increase of 8.9% over the adjusted 2019 budget. It includes plans to expand the service area as well the service frequency. COTA is also increasing its minimum wage to \$15 per hour, affecting about 65 employees and costing the agency an additional \$160,000 annually. COTA employs more than 1,000 people in total, and compensation (wages & benefits) makes up 63% of its budget. – C-Pass gives thousands of downtown employees the opportunity to ride COTA buses free. More than 440 companies and over 15,000 workers are currently enrolled in the program. Surveyed companies report that C-Pass helps them recruit and retain workers. Some say it had an impact on where they located their business.

A Complaint against the Columbus Dispatch

The Columbus Dispatch is a fine newspaper. For decades, it was affiliated with the conservative Wolfe family, but since 2015 it has become a more balanced and a more informative publication. But there is one thing that bothers us. Subscribers of the print edition may have noticed that the quarterly subscription price of \$106.06 paper includes a \$9 "paper statement fee." That's an added cost of \$36 annually for paying with checks. The paper statement fee can only be avoided when subscribers register for electronic payment. Sadly, people are saddled with many bills. But to our knowledge, the Columbus Dispatch is a complete outlier by charging this paper statement fee. We are unaware of any other publications or utility companies that attempt to coerce customers into electronic payment by charging an excessive fee. Newspapers struggle as it is; they should not create punitive disincentives for people to write checks. The Columbus Dispatch should rescind the measure or at the very least lower the fee, which disproportionately impacts elderly people with less digital knowhow.

STATE OF OHIO

Ohio Supreme Court

The Ohio Supreme Court has had a Republican majority for 34 years. As a result, Ohio is one of the most backward states in the nation. For example, to this day the LGBT community in Ohio is not protected from discrimination in housing and the work place. However, in 2020 it is possible that Ohio voters will flip the 5-2 Republican court to a 4-3 Democratic court. Seeking reelection are Republican justice Judith L. French and Sharon L. Kennedy. Justice French's challenger will be Democrat Jennifer Brunner, a former Ohio Secretary of State and now a judge. Justice Kennedy's challenger will be Democrat John O'Donnell, a Cuyahoga County judge. Few topics ever reach the highest court in the land – the U.S. Supreme Court. It is supreme-court decisions on the state level where most decisions are made – decisions on the death penalty, abortion, voting rights, gun laws, environmental regulations, and so on. Unions, Democrats, civic organizations, and environmentalists should make Ohio's Supreme Court elections the priority they are. It is time for Ohio to finally enter the 21st century.

Manufacturing Sector Shrinking in Ohio

Job creation in the manufacturing sector is not happening in Ohio, contrary to the rosy propaganda we hear from conservatives. Manufacturing continues to represent a significant part of Ohio's economy (12.5%, compared to 7.9% nationally), but it is losing positions, and with them high-wage jobs. A number of factors are responsible for the development: the diminished importance of the manufacturing sector, the Trump tariffs, the recent GM strike and the shutdown of the GM plant in Lordstown, problems with Boeing's 737 Max plane, and more. Not all economic sectors are suffering. The leisure & hospitality sector added some jobs in November 2019 as did the education and health-care sector. The unemployment rate is currently 4.2% in Ohio, compared with 3.5% nationwide.

Huge Methane Leak in Ohio

A natural gas leak that occurred in Ohio's Belmont County in February 2019 has turned out one of the largest methane leaks ever recorded in the U.S. and in the world. At the time, Exxon and its subsidiary, XTO Energy, said it could not determine how much of the odorless and colorless gas was emitted. However, an analysis of satellite images has now revealed the true extent of the leak. The new measurements show that 120 metric tons of methane were released per hour during the 20 days it took to plug the well. That's 2,880 tons per day or 57,600 tons total. That's more methane than the reported emissions of entire countries such as France and Norway. Exxon says that "this was an anomaly." However, industry observers know that methane leaks are actually a common occurrence throughout the U.S. Residents close to the well in Belmont Co. have long complained about health issues. In addition, methane is a greenhouse gas that can warm the planet more than 80 times as much as the same amount of carbon dioxide.

Ohio Will Lose Congressional Seat

Following the 2020 Census, Ohio is expected to lose one of its 16 congressional seats. While the population in southern and western U.S. states continues to grow, Ohio and other northern and eastern states are growing very slowly or are hemorrhaging people, resulting in a reapportionment of the available congressional seats. The state has lost much of its clout in Washington in recent years and decades. It remains a populous state, but currently only 3.56% of the total U.S. population (329 million) lives in Ohio (11.72 million). – California is also expected to lose a congressional seat whereas Texas may gain as many as 3 seats in the House.

More Renters than Homeowners

A new housing study by RentCafe, based on Census Bureau figures, finds that an increasing number of cities have become majority renter-occupied. In Ohio, Dayton (56.5%) and Toledo (50.2%) went from having a majority of owner-occupied households to renter-occupied households within the last decade. In both cities, the share rose by about 10 points. Ohio's figures remain well below that of New York (77%) and other Eastern cities, but this is a trend that is worth watching. The days when 1-family residential homes were the default norm may be over. Lack of affordability is certainly one factor. Higher density is fast becoming the new norm in communities around the nation. Eight of the 10 most common jobs in Ohio don't even pay enough for a worker to afford a modest-two-bedroom apartment, according to national low-income and homeless coalitions.

Ohio Debates Death Penalty

Ohio politicians are not worried about the moral implications of the death penalty, it seems. However, they are wondering if the death penalty should be kept on the books in light of the fact that pharmaceutical companies have threatened to stop selling their drugs to Ohio if their products are used in executions. Other conservative politicians are in favor of bringing back firing squads, the electric chair, and hanging (ironically, these are often the same people who use the phrase "sanctity of life" to fight against women's reproductive rights), but at the moment by law Ohio's sole method of execution is lethal injection. Ohio's last execution was in July 2018. All executions scheduled for 2019 are currently on hold. – A majority of Americans believes that life imprisonment without parole is a better option than the death penalty.

Flu Season May Be Bad This Year

Flu season is already in full swing. Experts are expecting a rough winter, especially once schools are back in session. Throughout the U.S., 3.7 million cases of flu have been diagnosed by Dec. 14, resulting in more than 32,000 hospitalizations and around 1,800 flu-related deaths. In Ohio, there were 404 flu hospitalizations as of Dec. 14, compared to 264 in 2018, an increase of 65%. – The local health district at 3 W. Winter St. says that the best way to protect yourself is to get the flu vaccine. The agency offers flu shots by appointment and, on Wednesdays from 7:30-11 am, on a walk-in basis. It takes about 2 weeks after the flu shot to develop full immunity.

OEFFA Meets in Dayton

The 2020 annual conference of the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) will be held Feb. 13-15 at the Dayton Convention Center in Dayton, Ohio. Keynote speakers are Laura Lengnick ("Resilient Agriculture") and Eric Holt-Giménez ("Can We Feed the World without Destroying It?"). Participation is not cheap, but informative and inspiring. To learn more, visit www.oeffa.org.

The Problem of Road Salt

America spreads more than 24 million tons of salt on its streets and roads each year. The amount is much more than was used in the past and has scientists worried about the cost of corrosion and contamination. Road salt typically consists of sodium and chloride, which can lead to damage to roads, bridges, and automobiles. A study by AAA found that road salt could be costing car owners as much as \$3 billion per year in repair costs. Salt and brine also does not simply disappear after it is applied. It is washed away into ditches, streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes. Scientists have documented the slow "salinization" of hundreds of freshwater lakes. In many instances, the salty content was high enough to kill plants

and small organisms or stunt the growth of aquatic creatures such as fish, snails, and tadpoles. – Luckily, there are solutions. Some communities have started to pretreat their roads with organic beet juice that is less corrosive and harmful to the environment. Some local towns now use “live-edge” snowplows that remove more snow and can thus significantly reduce salt use.

NATION

“Christianity Today” Calls for Trump’s Removal from Office

A leading evangelical magazine, “Christianity Today,” has called President Trump “profoundly immoral” and has called for his removal from office. In 1998, the magazine made a similar accusation against Democrat Bill Clinton during his impeachment trial. Editor-in-chief Mark Galli, formerly a Presbyterian pastor, writes that Trump is “a human being who is morally lost and confused” and a “bent and broken character” who has “dumbed down the idea of morality” in the nation. In his piece he notes that the reputation of evangelical religion and indeed the entire nation is at stake. A course reversal is necessary, or no one will ever again believe what Christians and Americans say to the world. (www.christianitytoday.com)

President Trump dismissed the centrist and moderate magazine, which was founded by Billy Graham, as a “far-left” publication that does not speak for all evangelical Christians. Other religious leaders echoed his words and condemned CT’s editorial as “partisan.” According to polls, 77% of white evangelical Protestants approve of the job Trump is doing. In 2016, 81% of them voted for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton. However, it is certainly significant that deep discontent and fissures are beginning to show. Some evangelicals welcomed Galli’s piece as a cathartic moment and lamented the fact that Trump has sullied the word “evangelical” for decades to come. But the fact is that far-right Christians, who do not read “Christianity Today,” remain the dominant force in American evangelicalism.

Donald Trump Resembles a Mafia Boss

Many have noted the similarities between the current White House and an organized crime syndicate, Donald Trump and a mobster. Trump’s connections with irreputable New York mafia figures date back to the 1970s; he disregards and mocks the law as they did; he shares some of their language; and like any mob boss he prizes personal loyalty and fealty above all else. The principle of “omerta” (silence) is highly valued. Trump rejects all cooperation with authorities (“the deep state”), as evidenced by his behavior in the impeachment process. Informants, whistleblowers, and witnesses are blackballed as “rats,” “snitches,” and “traitors.” Independent voices are likewise ostracized. Journalists are “the enemy of the people.” We see today that Trump has succeeded in creating a GOP that is totally loyal to him. Many Republican leaders don’t necessarily like the man, but they fear him and know well that their political survival depends on the level of their sycophancy. Trump, in turn, keeps close tabs on those who praise him and those who dare to applaud him only half-heartedly or not at all. Republican politicians and voters have long given up on talking about values and character, principles and policies. It’s now a cult of personality that binds them together – blind, slavish devotion to their leader, regardless of his many flaws and heresies. Some will follow their divine savior to the bitter end and beyond, just as people once fought for and defended Franco, Hitler, and Mussolini. Trump will be gone someday, but his toxic legacy will remain a superfund site for decades to come.

Why is Trump’s psychological profile important? Well, it is invaluable information in the hands of both national and international friends and foes. Allies figured out pretty quickly that fake flattery and idolatry can help achieve political goals. Book a flight of rooms at one of his hotels or golf courses, and you have his attention. Rivals learned that much of Trump’s rough rhetoric is empty swagger and bluster. He speaks loudly, but carries a little stick. When push comes to shove, he will yield even though he will of course never admit defeat. There is also much speculation that certain countries have damaging information on Trump in their possession and are using it to blackmail and control him. It is quite interesting, for instance, how beholden Trump is to Russia and Putin for reasons that have never been fully explained. He has said time and again that he does not

“work for Russia,” which may in fact be true. However, if foreign powers do exercise control and power over the American president, that would be alarming indeed.

Julián Castro Drops Out of Race

Presidential candidate Julián Castro has ended his campaign. He was a strong voice and advocate for the most vulnerable people, social justice, and minority rights. From 2014-17, he served as HUD Secretary under President Obama. The Democratic field started out as one of the most racially diverse ever, but it now seems increasingly likely that the primary will be an all-white affair. With Castro’s departure, the field has shrunk to 14. Andrew Yang is the only minority candidate left. Neither the Democratic Party nor America as a whole seems to have much interest in seeing a Latino, an African-American, or a woman in the White House. – Castro says he is “not done fighting.” He is a firm, clear, and moral voice. Hopefully, there will be a place for him in the next Democratic White House administration.

Will the Equal Rights Amendment Finally Pass?

Virginia is expected to vote in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment in the coming weeks, making it the 38th state to do so. Forty-seven years after the 1972 passage of the original ERA legislation by Congress, there is now the chance the law will be ratified and finally go into effect. The text reads, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.” It seems a no-brainer, right? Wrong. Not only have 12 states not yet passed the law, but 5 states have since voted to rescind their votes. Also, the original ratification deadline that Congress set has long expired. Can it be retroactively extended? In addition, there is growing resistance among male Republicans who fear that the ERA would encourage women to fight back against abortion restrictions adopted in several conservative states. Opponents warn that “activists would urge courts to use the amendment to overturn legitimate regulations of abortion and to mandate state funding of abortions.” Lastly, businesses are cognizant of the fact that equal pay for equal work might cost them a bundle and decrease their profits. – Half a century after the original 1972 legislation, women are still denied equal rights and power.

The GOP and Women

There are only 13 Republican women in the House of Representatives, the lowest number since 1993, and 8 Republican women in the Senate. (The Democrats have 88 and 17 women, respectively, in the House and Senate.) This is an embarrassing situation. The fact is that only white evangelical women remain firmly in the Trump camp. Young women, suburban women, college-educated women, and other groups feel alienated from a GOP that is known for misogyny and racism, gun rights, abortion bans, LGBT hostility, immigration restrictions, and more. Women favor the Democratic Party over the Republican Party by a 19-point margin. Among millennials, the percentage is even higher.

Boeing’s CEO Muilenberg Resigns

The CEO of Boeing, Dennis Muilenberg, abruptly resigned Dec. 23. Boeing’s board president David Calhoun will take over in January. Boeing’s 737 Max was grounded in March 2019 after two plane crashes that killed a combined total of 346 people. Software problems were blamed for the crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia, but the real culprit was a company culture that prioritized profits over safety and a colluding federal regulator (the FAA) that did not do its job. There were plenty of warning signs, but they were ignored. Boeing is now paying a very steep price for its criminal conduct. It is losing billions and billions of dollars. A quick software fix did not materialize and the company has now halted the production of the 737 Max, its most popular and profitable product. The ripple effect among some 8,000 companies in the supply chain is so huge that it has already negatively impacted the American labor market and GDP. In the meantime, Boeing’s future remains unsettled. It will take years to restore the lost public trust, and the only way to do it is a complete culture change based on transparency and safety.

Pete Buttigieg Releases List of Clients

Under the greatest of pressure, presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg has released a list of 9 clients he worked for during his 3 years with McKinsey and Company. It is not known if his list is complete. The 9 companies mentioned are: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Best Buy, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the EPA, the Energy Dept., the USPS, the Defense Dept., the Energy Foundation, and the Canadian supermarket chain Loblaws. McKinsey specializes in achieving financial savings. The New York Times reports that Buttigieg worked with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan just before the insurer announced it would axe up to 1,000 jobs, or about 10% of its work force. Buttigieg also did work that focused on looking for ways to extract and market Afghanistan's rich mineral resources. At the time, there was little emphasis on nation-building in the impoverished country. Instead, the focus was on how to plunder Afghanistan's unmined treasures valued at \$1 trillion.

New York Police Fights Right-Wing Extremism

The New York Police Dept. has created a security division that focuses on far-right and extremist hate groups. Dubbed "Racially and Ethnically Motivated Extremism" (REME), it appears to be one of the first of its kind organized within a local police department. Law enforcement on the federal and state levels have long ignored or neglected the danger of right-wing terrorism. To this day, supporters of domestic terror organizations face no charges in federal court whereas supporters of overseas terror organizations (e.g., Al Qaeda or ISIS) face stiff penalties. However, the thinking is slowly starting to change in favor of a more focused effort to detect and prevent hate crimes. Among the groups the NYPD is concerned about are The Proud Boys, Atomwaffen, the Patriot Front, Vanguard America, the Oathkeepers, Identity Evropa, and The Three Percenters. Many right-wing groups and militias hate minorities and promote white supremacy and a white ethno-state. – Ohio is one of the worst hotbeds of right-wing ideology in the U.S. Although we at "Community Matters" monitor ultra-right extremists closely, we are unaware of any concerted state, county, or city efforts to combat their activities locally. They continue to operate with impunity and often hide behind First-Amendment claims.

Congressman Matt Shea Accused of Domestic Terrorism

Washington State Lawmaker Matt Shea, leader of the Patriot Movement, stands accused in an investigative report of the House of Representatives of "domestic terrorism." He is alleged to have promoted, planned, and engaged in armed conflict of political violence against the U.S. He is alleged to have been suspended from the House Republican Caucus and was removed from several committees. Over the years, the congressman has increasingly embraced fringe ideologies, conspiracy theories, violent militias, and civil strife. Among other things, he has created a pamphlet entitled "Biblical Basis for War" in which he advocated the removal of the government, the establishment of a theocracy, attacks on political opponents, and the murder of all non-Christian males. He is also against LGBT people, other minorities, journalists, and public lands. According to his former wife and police reports, he also has significant anger issues. – Shea, 45, has called the investigation "a sham" and said he will not resign from Congress.

U.S. Population Growth Slowest in 100 Years

The population growth in the U.S. is the slowest since 1917/18. In 2018/19, the net gain was 1.5 million (about 0.5%). For the first time in decades, the "natural increase" (the number of births minus the number of deaths) was less than 1 million. As baby boomers are getting older, this trend is expected to continue. At this point, 4 states saw a natural decrease, meaning deaths outnumbered births: West Virginia, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Ten states saw population declines, meaning people were moving away to other areas: Alaska, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, and W. Virginia.

The problem is exacerbated by the immigration policy of the Trump administration. International migration decreased to 595,000 people from 2018 to 2019. Immigrants tend to be younger people who are in the work force and have children. However, white nationalists and supremacists are of the stated opinion that "foreign" babies are no substitute for white babies. Immigration from Norway and Sweden is fine in their eyes, but non-whites are not welcome.

Given that racist attitude, the U.S. population will soon stop growing and start to shrink.

California's Growth Slows Down

California is the U.S.'s most populous state, with almost 40 million. That's a population (and economy) larger than many countries in the world. However, growth has begun to slow to less than 1% annually and even stall. For the first time, more people are moving out of the state than into it. Dwindling immigration from abroad is one reason. Another may be the growing lack of affordable housing, resulting in increased homelessness and large numbers of people moving to more affordable states. Generally speaking, the U.S. is at a tipping point where several states have started to shrink. Ohio is one of the growing number of stagnating states that are beginning to lose more people than to gain. Immigration could compensate for the problem, but under Trump the number of eligible immigrants, refugee, and asylum seekers have plummeted to historic lows.

A Targeted Attack against a Jewish Store

On Wed., Dec. 11, two members of the Black Hebrew Israelites church drove up to a kosher market in Jersey City and killed 4 people. In the ensuing gun battle with SWAT officers, they were killed themselves. Public officials quickly condemned the targeted attack, calling it an anti-Semitic hate crime, but law-enforcement authorities were more cautious and said that they were still investigating the exact circumstances and motives of the shooters. The formal name of the Black Hebrew Israelites is "Israelite Church of God in Jesus Christ." The group is known to promote Black supremacy and to harbor anti-White and anti-Jewish sentiments. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has designated the fringe church as a hate group. Most Hebrew Israelites do not advocate violence, but there appears to be a rising a more radical sector within them. Many Orthodox Jews have moved to Jersey City in recent years, settling in what used to be a mostly Black neighborhood. That may have caused some resentment. For a while, Jersey City was turned into what looked like a full-fledged war zone. Perhaps the prolonged gun battle and lockdown is a taste of the future race wars that extremists sometimes evoke. Under President Trump, violent ideologies and activities of hate groups have exploded.

"The Age of Mass Shootings"

We seem to live in "the age of mass shootings," according to criminologist James Densley. The year 2019 has seen more mass killings in the U.S. than any other year since the 1970s when such events began to be tracked. By the end of December, there were 41 mass killings, defined as events where four or more people other than the perpetrator are killed. Of those, 33 were mass shootings. Other weapons included knives and axes. Ohio saw 3 mass killings that claimed 17 victims in 3 separate attacks, beginning with a shooting in Dayton that left 9 people dead. Densley thinks the mass slayings are a byproduct of the "angry and frustrated time" Americans live in.

James Harris Jackson Wanted to Start "Holy Race War"

In 2017, a black man – Timothy Caughman, 66 – was knifed to death in New York. James Harris Jackson, then 28, confessed to the murder and said he killed the stranger simply because he was black. He was hoping to start a racial holy war, or RaHoWa, with his act. In a manifesto he claimed to have carried out "God's will" and that "God has ordered us to eliminate the Negro races from the face of the earth for the good of all mankind." Black people, he said, were an inferior race and needed to be "exterminated." In 2019, Jackson pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life without parole.

James Harris Jackson grew up in a normal white family in Baltimore, but increasingly gravitated to violence, "the promise of absolute naked power," Nazi ideology, and the Daily Stormer. People like him are all around us and sometimes part of our lives. At one point, Jackson attended Ohio Wesleyan University, but flunked out of the first semester. He enlisted in the Army and spent one year in Baumholder, Germany (Delaware's sister city) before being sent to Afghanistan. He was honorably discharged in 2012. His descend into white supremacy and apocalyptic race wars continued and increased after that until that fateful day in New York on March 20, 2017.

Woman Attempts to Strangle Muslim University Student

A 23-year-old Oregon woman, Jasmine Renee Campbell, has been indicted on a hate crime, attempted strangulation, harassment, and criminal mischief. On Nov. 12, she attacked a Portland State Univ. student dressed in Muslim garb at a Portland train station and attempted to choke her with the religious headscarf. She then stripped down and rubbed the student's hijab over her naked breasts and genitals while disparaging Muslims. An arrest warrant was issued for her after she failed to appear in court on Jan. 3. While Campbell may have mental-health issues, the attack is in the vein of many others (see below).

Iowa Woman Attempts to Kill Mexican Girl

On Dec. 9, a woman in Clive near Des Moines, Iowa intentionally attempted to run over a 14-year-old girl because she looked "Mexican." Natalia M. was walking on a sidewalk on her way to school. The driver of a Jeep Grand Cherokee left the roadway and deliberately ran the girl over before fleeing. The teenager suffered a concussion and bruises and was hospitalized for 2 days. Nicole Marie Poole Franklin, 42, has since admitted to her crime and went on to make a number of derogatory statements about Latinos. She faces an attempted-murder charge and other charges. Even though she may have been under the influence of drugs, civic-rights groups are demanding that the incident be prosecuted as a hate crime. Attacks against minorities have dramatically increased since the election of Donald Trump and have quickly become the new norm. They don't even attract much media attention anymore.

Two More Attacks in December

Just before the year ended, there were two more violent assaults – one in New York, the other in Texas. In New York, a 37-year-old man attacked Hasidic Jews celebrating Hanukkah with a machete, injuring 5. Investigators discovered some connections to Hitler and Nazi ideology. U.S. and Israeli officials condemned the attack as an anti-Semitic hate crime and an act of domestic terrorism. The family of Grafton E. Thomas, however, says he has "a long history of mental illness and hospitalizations." He is being held without bail. – In Texas, Keith T. Kinnunen shot and killed 2 congregants during a Sunday service at West Freeway Church of Christ near Fort Worth. He was then shot and killed by a member of the church's volunteer security team. The mentally ill Kinnunen, 43, had an extensive criminal record, incl. multiple charges of aggravated assault with deadly weapons. Police are still investigating his motive. Kinnunen visited the congregation in the past and was given food, but he may have gotten angry because he did not receive any money.

Alex Jones from Infowars Fined \$100,000

Texas conspiracy theorist and Infowars host Alex Jones, 45, has claimed that the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Connecticut was "a hoax" that did not happen. As a result, he was sued in Austin for defamation by the parents of one of the 26 children who died. Similar lawsuits have been filed in Connecticut courts against Jones. After Jones and his legal team failed to produce any witnesses, a Texas judge, Scott Jenkins, has now ordered Jones to pay \$100,000 in legal fees to the attorneys representing the Sandy Hook father, Neil Heslin. In addition, Jenkins refused to dismiss the lawsuit. This is the latest court setback for Alex Jones. The Infowars host has since acknowledged that the Sandy Hook massacre did occur. – Let's hope that bankruptcy will put the far-right Alex Jones Show out of business forever.

Washington's Newseum Closes

Eleven years after it opened in 2008, the Newseum at 555 Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington, DC closed its doors on Dec. 31. For more than a decade the interactive museum told the nation's story, although some criticized it as being too America-centric. The museum's demise can be attributed to a number of reasons. For example, competing with the many free museums in the nation's capital was difficult, although the museum did attract more than 10 million visitors total. But surely the lack of philanthropic support, the national decline of print media, and the public's growing disinterest in journalism also played a key role. The Freedom Forum, which maintained the original Newseum in Virginia for years, has said that it will continue its mission online. The building has been sold to Johns

Hopkins Univ., which plans to consolidate some of its scattered programs under one roof.

Ron Imus Dead at 79

Radio talk-show host Ron Imus (1940-2019) has died at the age of 79. For nearly 50 years, from 1968 until 2018, the pioneering "shock jock" entertained, stunned, and offended millions of Americans with his crude, brutish, obscene, racist, sexist, and homophobic rants. His programs were a circus or carnival that contained little factual information of value. In fact, his brand of infotainment contributed to the on-going "dumbification" of voters. He was attacked, fired, and sued numerous times, but he did have a devoted fan base that stuck with him even when his irreverence went too far and despite his struggle with alcohol and cocaine addiction. As a private person, Imus may have been different, as stories of charitable giving seem to suggest. However, his public persona was deplorable and despicable. Society is better off without someone who makes hurtful and harmful comments every time he opens his mouth and is contributing nothing to making the world a better place.

Graduate Students on Strike in California

Graduate students at the Univ. of California, Santa Cruz have gone on strike and are threatening to withhold the grades of the undergraduate courses they teach under the supervision of professors. The area's housing costs are unusually high, and the students are asking for a reasonable cost-of-living adjustment to make ends meet. Many of them pay 60-70% of their teaching stipends on housing, incl. those who live in university-subsidized housing. Some who cannot afford the rents have spent time living in cars or in make-shift shacks. Many faculty and academic departments are supportive, but the university administration has called the strike "illegal" and refuses to negotiate with the students. That, in our view, is not a good idea. For one thing, students who go through ugly labor strikes have long memories and are unlikely to ever donate one penny to their alma mater later in life. We see that happen over and over again. If you want people to support you, you need to treat them right, fairly, and with respect at all times. Once the trust is broken, it is "game over."

The International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI)

According to its website (www.ilsa.org), the International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) is "a nonprofit, worldwide organization whose mission is to provide science that improves human health and well-being and safeguards the environment." However, a look behind deceptive phrases such as "a healthier world," "scientific integrity," "code of ethics," etc. reveals who and what really is behind ILSI, headquartered in Washington. It is the food and beverage industry that provides its \$17 million budget. Wikipedia says, ILSI "was founded in 1978 by Alex Malaspina, a former Coca-Cola executive, and it is financed by food and chemical industries such as BASF, Coca-Cola, Nestlé, McDonald's, Monsanto, Syngenta, and Pepsi." In the 1980s and 1990s the organization championed tobacco interests. Today, ILSI is pushing the idea that physical exercise rather than dietary changes is necessary to address the problem of obesity. This is the same strategy that Coca-Cola has long espoused. ILSI is currently expanding its activities into Asia and Latin America. It is no coincidence that its next annual meeting (Jan. 17-21) is in Costa Rica.

Boy Scouts Smaller after Mormons Pull Out

In the 1970s, the Boy Scouts of America had more than 4 million members. The organization is now down to less than 2 million after the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has pulled out some 400,000 young people effective Jan. 1. Besides declining membership, the Scouts are also struggling with sex-abuse lawsuits that are indeed moving them "closer to the brink of bankruptcy," according to the Columbus Dispatch. The end of the long-standing alliance between the Boy Scouts and the Mormon Church will hurt and "force many regional councils in the U.S. West to lay off employees and sell some camps" (Dispatch, 12/22). That helps explain why the Simon Kenton Council of the Boy Scouts of America is trying to get rid of the Chief Logan Reservation in Ray, near Chillicothe, and wants to sell, lease, or license 60 acres of Camp Lazarus, located within the City of Delaware.

A Link between Opioid Deaths and Economic Decline

A new study published in JAMA says that opioid deaths are almost twice as high in counties where automobile manufacturers have closed assembly lines compared with counties where such factories remain open. The findings are in line with previous research that also found a strong correlation between higher death rates and job displacement. The 112 counties studied are predominantly in the industrial Midwest, incl. in Michigan and Ohio. It goes without saying that "correlation is not causation," but a link does seem to exist. The study's authors are not ruling out other factors such as overprescription of opioids by doctors. However, their main point is that "social policy and economic policy are probably going to be health policy in the coming decade."

Obesity Is Getting Worse

New research published in the New England Journal of Medicine says that the obesity epidemic in the country keeps getting worse. If the current trajectory continues, 49.2% of American adults will be obese by 2050. The threshold that defines obesity is a body-mass index (BMI) of 30 or more. Severe obesity (having a BMI of 40 or more) is also getting more common. As a general rule, obese people tend to be sicker, live shorter lives, and incur steeper health-care costs. Severe obesity can lead to joint and back problems, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, and early death. Despite decades of talk, not a single U.S. state has been able to stabilize and reduce the obesity rate of its population. It is clear that efforts have so far failed. Much more must be done in the areas of education, nutrition, and exercise to address the situation, starting in K-12 schools.

Americans Prefer to Die at Home

For the first time in half a century, a plurality of Americans are dying at home instead of hospitals, hospices, or nursing homes. The New England Journal of Medicine reports that as of 2017 30.7% of natural deaths occurred at home, 29.8% in hospitals, 20.8% in nursing homes, and 8.3% in hospice facilities. The percentage of people dying at home is expected to increase in the future as many prefer to pass away in comfort and surrounded by family members and beloved pets. The growing availability of in-home services and hospice care has also been a contributing factor. Dying at home may not be the right choice for everyone. Experts recommend putting an end-of-life plan in place that will determine where someone wants to die and if s/he wishes to be resuscitated.

Growing Backlog of Superfund Sites

The Trump administration has built up a large backlog of unaddressed hazardous and toxic Superfund clean-up projects. A total of 34 Superfund sites in 17 states and Puerto Rico languished for lack of money in 2019, up from only 12 in 2016 under President Obama. The Trump administration has targeted the EPA from the start. The general goal is to eliminate federal regulations and oversight. Disregarding science is one of the tactics employed, starving the agency of funds another, putting industry-friendly people in charge a third. Andrew Wheeler, the current EPA administrator, is a former lobbyist for the coal industry. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) looked at 1,571 Superfund sites last year (not including military sites) and has found that 327 of them are in areas prone to sea-level rise and flooding. Other risks include hurricanes and wildfires. However, the EPA has rejected these findings and played down the reality of climate change.

Falling Debris an Urban Hazard

Just like trees in the woods continuously shed leaves, blooms, seeds, sap, twigs, snow, and more, so do buildings in cities. In towns such as Delaware the impact is minimal although a close observer will often notice fallen shingles, broken glass, pieces of mortar, or junks of ice around older structures. In bigger cities such as Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus, however, falling debris can pose a real threat to the public. In New York, hundreds of buildings receive class-1 violations every year, which are the most serious and must be fixed immediately. Nevertheless, some building owners skirt their obligations. In Manhattan, a pedestrian (Erica L. Tishman) was recently killed by a piece of building façade on the way to or from her office. The case rattled New Yorkers and caused the city to conduct a

number of additional surprise inspections. It also prompted the Dept. of Buildings to hire a dozen new dedicated façade inspectors. – As Delaware is both aging and growing in size, this is something local inspectors should also keep an eye on.

Puerto Rico Keeps Cockfighting Alive

Despite a federal ban against cockfighting, the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico has enacted a law that keeps the 400-year-old tradition alive. Most people consider cockfighting a form of animal abuse and animal cruelty, but others defend it as part of Puerto Rico's cultural heritage. Cockfighting typically involves razor blades attached to the roosters' legs and performance-enhancing drugs. It is a profitable "sport" that often involves drugs, guns, and crime. It is a practice that is widely condemned as cruel and barbaric.



Attack of the Tumbleweeds

Rolling tumbleweeds have been part of the American West for decades. Sometimes, there are so many of them that they can bury homes and roads. On New Year's Eve, Washington State witnessed such an attack of windblown tumbleweeds near Richland on Route 240. When cars and trucks stopped at the side of the road for lack of visibility, the tumbleweeds started to pile up around them, as high as 30 foot. Vehicles and the people inside them were trapped for hours. The highway was closed and crews started to clear it with snowplows. It took them 10 hours to do so. – Tumbleweeds are actually an invasive species known as Russian thistle, which likes the arid desert climate of the American West. The resilient plant was introduced inadvertently in the 1870s.

in a dark place

we are in a dark place
miles away from god's grace

monsters gather at the gate
howling with insatiable hate

hideous are the features
of these demonic creatures

revengeful is their rancor
unleashed their red-hot anger

sulfurous the rotten smell
of the foul forces from hell

who want to strangle all the light
and usher in eternal night

crystal is not all they smash
temples are not all they trash

they will burn and kill
they will have their fill

WORLD

World Population at 7.75 Billion

The world's population grew by 83 million people in 2019. The total population is estimated to be 7.754 billion by Jan. 1, 2020. The 8-billion mark may be reached and exceeded by 2023. 83 additional humans within one year is not necessarily good news. All these people need housing, energy, food, and water. Is there a limit to how many people Earth can sustain in the age of climate change?

The funny thing is, of course, that as early as 1798 Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) warned against "overpopulation" at a time when the world population hadn't even reached 1 billion yet. There is no question that population growth is accompanied by major challenges, but this very fundamental question requires deep study and thought. Flip answers of any kind are not appropriate.

Davos 2020

The 50th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum will take place in Davos, Switzerland, Jan. 21-24, 2020. This is where the world's elite meets to discuss long-term economic, political, and cultural topics. Chief executives, technology pioneers, political leaders, and spiritual & cultural icons gather in the spirit of international cooperation and governance. Obviously, the current decade not as friendly to globalists anymore as previous decades. "Today, we see an erosion of the international solidarity that forms the foundation of our global governance architecture," a WEF document laments. Nationalistic states have shown little interest in pressing global concerns such as climate change & sustainability, how to regulate big tech companies, emerging cyberthreats, "stakeholder capitalism," and economic diversity & inclusion. "Davos Man" and "Davos Woman" is interested in all this and more, incl. women's rights, criminal-justice reform, the refugee problem, jobs of the future, and economic aid. The spectrum of topics explored at the annual conference is huge and fresh, educational and inspiring to read.

Critics will of course point out that what happens in Davos literally and figuratively takes place high up in the clouds. They say that too few ideas get implemented, and the whole glittering spectacle is just for show. They are right, of course. "Davos Man" is not really in touch with and interested in the nitty-gritty lives of workers, wages, strikes, collective bargaining, and the like. The assembled dignitaries may ponder economic inequity and wealth redistribution theoretically, but when it comes to practical solutions there is only silence. A New York Times article drily commented, "Nowhere in the discussion was there a mention of tax policy, or addressing the soaring costs of gaining higher education, or access to health care."

The Long Shadow of Austerity Policies

New York Times' Paul Krugman has made an interesting argument. In a piece published 12/31, "The Legacy of Destructive Austerity," he claims that the ideology of fiscal austerity "helped set the stage for the current crisis of democracy." Countries that imposed harsh austerity measures between 2010 and 2015 suffered not only severe economic downturns but also made possible the rise of illiberal right-wing parties and governments, incl. in the U.S. Fiscal stimulus would have been the better way, Krugman says. The "austerity mania" of the past was counterproductive because it alienated the working and middle class, prolonged the economic recession, and resulted in a political backlash. In addition, it fatally damaged the credibility of establishment politicians and government experts (economists, scholars, scientists) to the point where ordinary people no longer take them seriously. Many folks felt the federal government and/or the European Union were the enemy of the people. Studies have also shown that savage austerity measures in Europe had a devastating effect on human health, driving alcohol and drug addiction, depression and suicide, and reduced access to care and medicines. – Students of history will recall the sad history of the Weimar Republic (1918-33). Allied demands for impossibly high war reparations and brutal austerity measures created a situation where the rise of Adolf Hitler and fascism was possible and perhaps even inevitable.

Why Is Franz Ferdinand Trending?

Austrian-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in 1914, an event that triggered World War I. On Jan. 2, 2020, Iran's top military commander, General Qassem Soleimani, was killed by American drones in Baghdad, Iraq. The assassination was ordered by President Trump, who in 2011 accused President Obama of wanting to start a war against Iran to get elected. He did not ask for congressional approval for what Iran calls "an act of war." The price of oil and gold went up and the stock market plummeted amid anxiety about the preservation of world

peace. The unprovoked, unwarranted, and unauthorized attack rattled the global community, and there is now a lot of speculation about the extremely volatile situation. Iran has promised retaliation against the death of Soleimani, an immensely popular general in the country and well-known throughout the Middle East. Iraq is not happy about the blatant violation of its sovereignty either; its legislators have passed a resolution asking U.S. troops to leave the country. The plot against Soleimani has not made America and the world safer; on the contrary. Could the hostilities be the start of WW III, and is Trump doing all this to distract from his impeachment and to ensure his reelection? It certainly would fit his character. No unbiased analyst has so far stated that Trump's tactics and strategies were based on legitimate military considerations. Both George W. Bush and Barack Obama declined to take out Soleimani when they had the chance because they knew what was at stake. – President Trump has no background in foreign policy. Real estate is all he knows. His performance in Afghanistan, Korea, Iran, Venezuela, and other parts of the world has been incompetent, and he has absolutely nothing to show for it. Ignorance, inexperience, and miscalculations have led to one disaster after another.

Strikes in France

There is no end in sight for the strikes in France that have paralyzed the country for the past 4 weeks. The strikes, which enjoy strong public support, are not just about pensions, which pro-business President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Edouard Philippe want "to reform" and "to modernize." The government says the current system is "unaffordable" and urges citizens to be more "responsible." They intend to raise the retirement age and reduce payments. Most people do not think the system is broken and wish to preserve it. What the strikes are really about is the country's future and the nation's soul. Bureaucrats and technocrats want to change the inviolable French way of life, wishing it to be more efficient and cost-effective, but the French citizens are loath to do so. For them, there is more to life than money. Their pursuit of happiness is different from that of their wannabe masters. Some observers have marveled at the fact that even French high-school students are demonstrating for their old-age pensions. That is a fundamental misunderstanding. What the young people are defending is their deep-seated value system, with timeless traditions and customs, that is threatened by a hostile takeover of the disruptive forces of modernity. No French government has ever succeeded in changing the pension system. In a country that treasures 200 kinds of cheeses, it is a fool's errand to even try and come up with a uniform formula for something. So far, Macron has kept up his confrontational stance, but his administration has started to show some cracks. Various concessions have been made to different professional groups already, among them police officers, railroad workers, airline pilots, dancers and so on. At the going rate, it won't be long before the country is back at the status quo – 42 different pensions systems. Then everybody will declare victory, and life goes on.

Japan's Population Continues to Shrink

Japan is a country of 124 million, but more people are dying than being born. Births fell below 900,000 in 2019 whereas the number of deaths was expected to reach almost 1.4 million. In other words, Japan will have 500,000 people this year than last year. The government estimates the population could shrink by around 16 million (nearly 13%) over the next 25 years. The country has made some efforts to create incentives to push up the fertility rate and for people to have more babies, but so far they have been inadequate. There are not enough day-care opportunities for working mothers, for instance. Japan has also begun to accept limited numbers of immigrants to handle certain jobs, but the homogeneous country remains essentially closed to migrants who could make up the difference. The nation has also begun to experiment with robots as a supplement for its shrinking work force. – Japan is not the only industrialized country facing a demographic crisis. Many other Asian and European nations also face declining birthrates, incl. the U.S. This poses a serious threat to their economic vitality and social safety net.

Austria Forms New Government

After the right-wing coalition of ÖVP and FPÖ ended in scandal, Austria held snap elections in September. A new government

has now emerged – an unlikely coalition of the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) and the leftist Green party. In many respects, the two parties are ideological opposites, e.g., in the areas of immigration, climate change, and economic policies. Sebastian Kurz will remain Austria’s chancellor; his ÖVP had the most votes with 37%. It is clear that he is a political chameleon for whom power is more important than principles. – Coalitions between conservatives and green parties are not uncommon in Austria, Germany, and the rest of Europe. If the new Austrian coalition succeeds, it may well serve as a template for other European democracies.

BBC Comes under Attack

There is little doubt that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), founded in 1922, is a bureaucratic behemoth that would benefit from a little shake-up. In recent years, it has also come under attack for paying its female stars much less than its male stars. And regular BBC listeners have their own gripes about the sometimes odd content choices of the broadcasting company. However, none of that justifies calls to defund it or to end its journalistic independence. Now that conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson has won the latest elections with a resounding majority, attempts to change the BBC’s business model have increased. The broadcaster is funded by a license fee that British television owners pay annually – currently £154.50 (about \$200). It generates about 3.6 billion British pounds a year for the broadcaster, or about 75% of its funding. Conservatives argue that BBC, an independent news organization, was not supportive enough of Brexit. Evocative of President Trump’s media criticism, they seem to demand more loyalty. The Johnson administration has gone so far as to boycott the popular BBC radio program “Today,” where politicians often face tough questions. It has also asked for a review of the enforcement of the license fee. An outspoken critic of BBC, John Whittingdale, has even spoken of not renewing the BBC’s charter and has called the disappearance of the BBC “a tempting prospect.”

China Commissions Another Aircraft Carrier

China has commissioned (i.e., put in active service) its first domestically built aircraft carrier. Its 1st carrier, the Liaoning, was purchased from Ukraine. The 2nd carrier, the Shandong, was built in the northern port city of Dalian. China’s leader, Xi Jinping, personally presided over the ceremony held on the southern island of Hainan, where the vessel will be based. Construction of a 3rd carrier has already started at a shipyard near Shanghai, and there are reports of plans for a 4th. The new carrier has a capacity of 36 J-15 fighter jets as well as other aircraft and helicopters. – The additional ship is a major milestone for China. It is also a powerful indication of China’s military ambitions in the Pacific region. The U.S. currently has 10 aircraft carriers in active service. At the going rate, China’s fleet will be greater than that of the U.S. in the foreseeable future.

China Jails Most Journalists

Being a journalist is a dangerous profession, as the New York-based advocacy group Committee to Protect Journalists writes in its 2019 annual report. Many authoritarian regimes are eager to crack down on and stamp out independent reporting. Once again, at least 250 journalists were imprisoned around the world. Not included in the count are dozens of individuals not currently jailed who are facing trial and those who live in exile. For the first time, China emerged as the world’s leading jailer of journalists. At least 48 of them are incarcerated there, followed by Turkey with 47. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are tied for 3rd place with 26 imprisoned journalists. Compared with 2018 (255 incarcerations), the situation has not improved. – The advocacy work of the Committee to Protect Journalists has helped lead to early release of at least 80 journalists since its founding in 1981, according to the New York Times.

Abject Failure in Afghanistan

Documents have revealed that there was never any chance that the U.S. would succeed with nation-building in Afghanistan. The Soviets tried it decades ago and utterly failed. The U.S. fared no better, as a cache of recently released documents shows. For years, politicians and military leaders lied and said their strategy in Afghanistan was succeeding. But privately Army generals admitted, “We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan –

we didn’t know what we were doing” (Douglas Lute). After 18 years of fighting, 2,400 American deaths, and an expense of more than \$1 trillion, America has nothing to show for it.

He Jianku Sentenced to 3 Years

Chinese researcher He Jianku was sentenced to 3 years in prison. In November 2018, he stunned the world when he announced he had created the world’s first gene-edited babies by using the controversial CRISPR technique. (See “Community Matters,” Dec. 2018.) He intentionally avoided oversight, did not seek approval, used unauthorized and unethical technology, and made misleading statements. What he did alerted the world to the fact that the specter of gene manipulation and “designer babies” was real and that better protections were needed against rogue and reckless scientists.

Don’t Get Sick in Romania

A female cancer patient died on the operating table when an alcohol-based disinfectant ignited after a surgeon used an electric scalpel. The accident happened on Dec. 22 in the Floreasca Hospital in Bucharest, Romania. A nurse threw a bucket of water on the patient when she began to burn “like a torch,” but the 66-year-old woman died after 40% of her body was burned. Romania is one of poorest countries in Europe. Its ailing health-care system uses much inferior and dilapidated equipment, even in major hospitals such as Floreasca. Although the tragic and embarrassing incident caught the attention of the government, it is unlikely that anything substantial will change in the foreseeable future.

A Tragedy in Germany

In the Krefeld Zoo, the building that houses primates burned down in the early morning hours of New Year’s Day. More than 30 animals died, among them chimpanzees, orangutans, gorillas as well as some monkeys, birds, and bats. After the fire, the zoo near Düsseldorf (North-Rhine Westphalia) closed for a couple of days. The cause of the fire remains under investigation, but police have found evidence of flying sky lanterns – miniature hot-air balloons that use real fire to make the lanterns airborne. Widely used in Asia, they are both illegal and uncommon in Germany. Fireworks are also suspected. It is customary for German citizens to organize their private fireworks on New Year’s Day. There are few restrictions to do so despite the fact that hundreds of people lose their fingers or eyesight every year; that buildings burn down on a regular basis; that millions of euros are wasted in this manner; and that the air pollution is bad for the environment. Perhaps this tragedy will serve as a wake-up call and result in better legislation. – **Update:** A 60-year-old mother and her two adult daughters have turned themselves in to police in Krefeld. They are being investigated on suspicion of negligent arson.

J. K. Rowling Accused of Transgender Bias

J. K. Rowling’s “Harry Potter” series remains a major achievement. It is a lasting statement in favor of individuality, independence, and human dignity. However, J. K. Rowling has now been accused by national and international gay and transgender groups of transphobia after she expressed support for Maya Forstater, 45. “#IStandWithMaya,” Rowling tweeted. Forstater’s contract at a London think tank was not renewed after the tax expert commented that in her view one’s sex is an immutable biological fact and that people cannot change their gender. Judge James Taylor criticized her exclusionary, “absolutist” language and ruled that ignoring the dignity and legal rights of transgender people was incompatible with the Equality Act of 2010. LGBT groups have long suspected that J. K. Rowling held negative views of transgender people. A spokesperson for GLAAD said that Rowling has now “aligned herself with an anti-science ideology that denies the basic humanity of people who are transgender.” – Clearly, despite all her accomplishments Rowling remains unfinished as a person. Albus Dumbledore would not approve of the blinders she wears. It remains to be seen if Rowling will apologize for her error in judgment. Even if she does, people will question her sincerity and wonder if she only did it for the sake of economic expediency.

World Trade Organization Defanged

The appellate body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has lost its ability to issue rulings after the U.S. blocked the

appointment of new judges. President Trump and his top trade negotiator, Robert Lighthizer, are vociferous critics of WTO despite the fact that the international organization has often ruled in favor of the U.S. In fairness, both President Obama and President George W. Bush also disliked WTO's ability to issue binding rulings in the area of trade. Their chief argument was and is that the international trade association is an impediment to national sovereignty and protectionism. WTO's lower court can still hear cases, but its decisions are null and void if the loser appeals to a higher court that has ceased to function. Critics of the American stance argue that this is a return to "the law of the fist" and "the law of the jungle" as trade disputes can no longer be settled by ordinary means. The danger is that more and more countries will resort to coercion, tariffs, sanctions, boycotts, and force to achieve their economic goals. This is what 100 years ago led to WW I.

Wakanda – A Valued Trading Partner

BBC News has reported that the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) has listed the East African country Wakanda as a valued free-trade partner. About half of all U.S. exports go to FTA partner countries. The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) partner list states that the goods traded with Wakanda include dairy cows, donkeys, and ducks. The country in Black Africa does have a good reputation. Perhaps the U.S. should consider building an embassy there and help promote more exports and tourism? Of course, that wouldn't exactly stop President Trump from slapping on trade tariffs – he has been doing it many allies, incl. Canada and Mexico, France and Germany. Those Wakandan donkeys and ducks are definitely a threat to U.S. national security, he might declare. Gotta show the world who is boss. – The problem is, of course, that Wakanda does not exist. It is a fictional country from the movie "Black Panther." The error was spotted by a New York-based software engineer with the name of Francis Tseng. In its defense, the USDA says that the list was part of a testing file for staff and should not have gone public.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Madrid Climate Talks End in Failure

Unable to break a deadlock, the 2019 U.N. climate talks known as COP25 (Conference of Parties) in Madrid ended in an impasse, despite going into overtime. The conference began with some modest hopes, but there was no agreement over new climate targets. Leaders of the world's largest economies (e.g., the U.S., Australia, Brazil, China, India, and the UK) resisted calls for more ambitious climate goals. They also pushed back against demands by smaller and poorer countries to help them cope with the economic damage and loss from climate change. In addition, delegates postponed until next year discussions about rules for international carbon trading. The gap between what science requires the world to do and the political reality on the ground seems wider than ever. Even the (inadequate) agreements of the 2015 Paris climate agreement are at risk of being dismantled in this new age of nationalism and nativism, as the example of the U.S. shows. The next U.N. climate summit will be in November 2020 in Glasgow, Scotland. By then the U.S. will no longer be a member of the Paris accord.

Australia Experiences Hottest Day in History

It is summer in Australia, and on Dec. 17 the country experienced its hottest day in history. The average maximum temperature across the country was 105.6 degrees Fahrenheit (40.9 degrees Centigrade). In parts of the country the temperatures exceeded 110°F (43.3°C) and even 120°F (48.9°C). Australia has been battling devastating droughts and out-of-control wildfires for weeks. The air pollution in and around Sydney is reportedly worse than in Beijing and New Delhi. Australia's largest city, Sydney, has joined metropolitan cities around the world to declare a "climate emergency" and has made sustainability a priority. However, conservative Prime Minister Scott Morrison continues to downplay climate change and global warming. He is an evangelical Christian who has expressed admiration for President Trump. While his country was burning, he holidayed in Hawaii.



australian summer

fierce wildfires are raging
they are out of control
politicians are in denial
that climate change plays a role

many people died trying
to save cars, homes, and cattle
but it was a forlorn hope
and they lost the battle

on the beach survivors now huddle
rafts and boats on their side
the time has arrived
to take advantage of the tide

the red inferno is close now
it melts metal and bursts trees
people start to row and float
and suddenly are refugees

this is but a small taste
of the horrors that lie ahead
what the world witnessed
should fill all with dread

Greta Thunberg Meets David Attenborough

The age difference between Swedish climate-change activist Greta Thunberg and natural historian David Attenborough is more than 70 years. Attenborough is 93 compared to Thunberg who turns 17 on Jan. 3. But when the two of them met via Skype in late December, they expressed profound appreciation for each other. Thunberg hailed Attenborough's BBC documentaries about the natural world as something that inspired and motivated her. She thanked him for dedicating his life to the environment. He, in turn, praised her for her ability to create awareness of the climate crisis and to arouse the world – something his generation failed to do. At the end of the video, they said they hoped someday to meet each other in person.



Greta Thunberg's Speeches Published

Greta Thunberg is only 17, but she has already published a little book with her speeches ("No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference," Penguin Books 2019, vi + 106 pp., \$10). The collection includes her addresses at the U.N., Davos, and European Parliament as well as national parliaments in France, the U.K., and the U.S. Altogether there are 16 of them. To be clear – her speeches are not rhetorical masterpieces, and there is a lot of repetition. If Greta Thunberg ever wins the Nobel Prize, it won't be the one for literature. However, she speaks the unvarnished truth, and there is power in her words. World leaders have failed us in the fight against climate change, and we are running out of time. The point of no return will be reached very soon, and perhaps it is already too late. Politicians may tell many beautiful and hopeful "fairy tales," but their promises are empty. What is needed instead is a complete paradigm shift, says Greta Thunberg. The system itself must be changed, and we need "a whole new way of thinking." The emission of greenhouse gases must

be stopped entirely, not just reduced. Why are leaders in denial and don't listen to what science says? It's all about generating profit in the here and now. Is it a coincidence that the U.S., the world's largest producer of oil and gas, is at the same time "the only nation in the world that has signaled your [its] strong intention to leave the Paris Agreement" (91-92)? Sadly, Greta Thunberg has received "unimaginable amounts of hate and threats. We are being mocked and lied about by elected officials, members of parliaments, business leaders, journalists." (78) Accusations include allegations of being mentally retarded and/or being used and manipulated by others. However, Greta Thunberg is not easily intimidated or distracted from her priorities. She knows the one and only meaning of truth and does not subscribe to the idea that people can make up their own facts.

SPACE

What's That Bright Star?

Most of the times people have their eyes glued to their smart phones, but once in a while someone may ask, "What's that bright star?" What's shining so bright on the southwestern sky just after dark is Venus, also called morning star or evening star. It is of course not a star, but one of the sun's planets. The best nights to catch the planet is when the crescent moon stands nearby, which occurs Jan. 27-28, Feb. 27, March 27-28, April 26, and May 23-24. No binoculars or telescopes are needed to observe the Venus-moon conjunctions.

70 Countries Have Satellites

Ethiopia is the latest country that launched a satellite into space. A Chinese rocket transported the weather satellite into its orbit. It weighs only 72 kilograms. Satellites are used for a wide variety of purposes – military, intelligence (espionage), weather, observation, communication, navigation, and so on. Some are in use for climate-change research (carbon, methane, glaciers, and wildfires), others have more nefarious purposes. However, the fact is that it is getting quite crowded and congested up there. Collisions have already occurred since there is little or no coordination between countries, companies, and the military. You can launch wherever and whenever you want – orbits close to Earth are currently not assigned. There may well be a million pieces of "space junk" in orbit. Most of them are so small that they cannot be seen and tracked with conventional methods. The number of tiny specks or flecks is estimated to be in the hundreds of millions. These pieces are moving to incredibly fast that even a small shard could knock out a satellite. Also, many older satellites are now "dead" and have spun out of control. Another concern is that satellites, once in space, are vulnerable to hostile attacks. In a war it would seem likely that they are among the first targets to be destroyed by the enemy. It is clear that space is reaching a tipping point fast where the risk to satellites, space travel, and the International Space Station is very real. International cooperation is needed to catalog and track the debris and to devise a cost-effective system to clean up the rubbish. Given the world's new nationalism, however, meaningful progress in the foreseeable future seems unlikely.

HAPPY NEWS

California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)

In December, "Community Matters" googled "grandfather clocks." Within hours, we were bombarded with pop-up ads selling grandfather clocks on numerous websites every time we accessed them, incl. the Delaware Gazette and the New York Times. The same is often true for cellphones. – A new California law, the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), now allows consumers to opt out of the sale of their personal data. Companies can and will continue to indiscriminately collect everything, but when asked they must now tell consumers what it is they are collecting and delete it all when requested. (Some exceptions do apply.) Big Tech lobbied hard to rewrite and soften the laws. To some extent the companies were successful. Enforcement of the new law is weak. For example, in case businesses continue to sell private data despite the new law, consumers are prohibited from suing. Although the CCPA is touted as

"the toughest privacy law in the U.S.," it is more or less an empty symbolic gesture that lacks teeth. As far as privacy protection is concerned, the European Union has more advanced legislation.

Heisman Trophy Winner Uses Platform for Good

The 2019 Heisman Trophy winner, Louisiana State Univ. quarterback Joe Burrow, used his acceptance speech to highlight food insecurity in Ohio's Athens County and Appalachia. In Athens County, one in 3 people live below the poverty line. Burrow, 23, attended Athens High School (2011-14) and first played for OSU before transferring to LSU. "Coming from southeast Ohio," Burrow said, "it's a very impoverished area and the poverty rate is almost two times the national average. There's so many people there that don't have a lot, and I'm up here for all those kids in Athens and Athens County that go home to not a lot of food on the table, hungry after school." His remarks sparked an online fundraising campaign, organized by Will Drabold, that quickly generated hundreds of thousands of dollars to benefit the Athens County Food Pantry. The food bank serves 5,000 families in the county every year and serves about 9,000 meals each month. – Male athletes often generate negative news. It is refreshing to see a young football player to think of others instead of himself and to use his head and his heart for positive change.

Former Miners Learn New Skills

The December issue of "American Profile" reports that laid-off coal miners in economically challenged West Virginia are learning new skills. The Appalachia Beekeeping Collective is teaching them beekeeping classes. The goal is to create new economic opportunities for low-income families in impoverished rural areas. The collective, which has received a very large grant to support its initiative, is based in Summers County but operates in 16 other counties as well. The collective not only teaches the necessary knowhow but also processes and markets the honey its members produce. (More information can be found on the internet.)

Rosa Parks Statue Unveiled

Civil-rights pioneer Rosa Parks was honored with a new statue in her hometown of Montgomery, Alabama. Parks was arrested on Dec. 1, 1955 after she refused to give up her seat on a public bus to a white man. Over 40,000 African-American men and women boycotted the bus system for 382 days after the incident. Alabama's governor, Kay Ivey, and Montgomery's mayor, Steven Reed, were present at the unveiling of the life-size statue. – Rosa Parks was 92 when she died in 2005.



Billings, Montana

This is an older story, but it is an inspiring one. Billings, Montana experienced a rash of racist and anti-Semitic incidents in 1992/93. They culminated when someone threw a paving stone through the bedroom window of two Jewish children in a home that had a Hanukkah menorah on display. There were local authorities and businesses that wanted to sweep the whole thing under the rug. But as it turned out, in response thousands of households put paper cutouts of a menorah in their windows, made available to residents under the leadership of the "Billings Gazette" and the police chief. The message was clear: "Not in Our Town" and "Hate has no home here." – If a racist, sexist, xenophobic, or homophobic incident of this nature were to happen in Delaware, it is our wish for 2020 that the local residents would act as swiftly and decisively as the citizens of Billings did in 1993.

The Redirect Method

The Redirect Method was first used against potential recruits for the Islamic State. Now the London-based company Moonshot CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) has repurposed it against white supremacists and terrorists in the U.S. It sends, or "redirects," those in search of extremist online content to websites and videos that promote anti-extremist views. The idea of the

counterterrorism program is to disrupt the process of radicalization. This is how it works: supposed someone typed in the search terms like "Heil Hitler" or "The Turner Diaries," an ad then pops up that promotes context and/or alternatives. People's privacy is not violated in the process, according to Moonshot CVE. – The Canadian government was awarded Moonshot \$1.5 million for its innovative program. A pilot last summer, in conjunction with the Anti-Defamation League and Gen Next Foundation, showed promise and was deemed a success. However, so far the company has had difficulties raising public or private money in the U.S. There was no shortage of money in the fight against ISIS, but the idea of "domestic terrorism" is still anathema to many.

Wisconsin Bill Protects Referees and Umpires

Referees and umpires have seen a disturbing national trend – at youth sporting events they are increasingly verbally harassed and physically attacked by overengaged parents who want their kids' teams to win at all costs. Wisconsin is now looking at a bipartisan bill that would make the violent harassment of sports officials a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine up to \$10,000 and 9 months in jail. The harassment of people who officiate games is a disincentive and has led to a decline in sign-ups. A number of Wisconsin sports associations support the bill. – "Community Matters" is not in favor of criminalizing normal human behavior, but clearly something needs to be done to rein in parental misconduct on the sports field. Parents should be role models for their children, not set bad examples. Hopefully, a stern warning will do the trick. However, if and when a violent attack against a ref or umpire happens, resulting in injury, then a fine and/or jail sentence would indeed be the appropriate response.

Palau Bans Harmful Sun Cream

The Pacific island nation of Palau, located north of Australia, has become the first nation in the world to ban sun cream that is harmful to coral reefs and sea life. The ban prohibits the sale and wearing of sunscreens that contain any of 10 ingredients, among them oxybenzone and octinoxate. Parts of Palau are a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the nation markets itself as a pristine paradise for divers. The U.S. State of Hawaii has announced a similar ban, effective 2021. Other island territories are following suit. Major brands say they have no problems with the ban and have started to advertise sun creams that are "reef-bill-compliant."

Riley Howell Honored as "Jedi Master"

When a gunman (Trystan Andrew Terrell) opened fire in a classroom at the Univ. of North Carolina, Charlotte on April 30, 2019, he was charged and body-slammed by 21-year-old student Riley Howell. He and another student were killed by gunfire, 4 others were wounded. Police say that Howell's actions prevented more injuries and deaths. Howell was a huge fan of "Star Wars" and had an encyclopedic knowledge of the franchise. Lucasfilm has now honored "Ri-Lee Howell" in a forthcoming book, "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker – The Visual Dictionary." The entry is just 66 words, but praises him as a hero whose courage and selflessness brings out the Jedi in all of us.



Baby Yoda

"The Mandalorian" is not a particularly memorable film series. There is neither much depth nor much plot. Its essence is evanescent. But one thing remains: "Baby Yoda," as it is known across the internet galaxy. Officially it is called "the child" or "the foundling." Is it a coincidence that it arrived just before Advent? Who or what is this mysterious creature? Is it a savior and a messiah for a world badly in need of salvation and redemption? Will it be a fighter against climate change and for a greener world? Will it ever be reunited with its own kind? The child may be vulnerable and adorable now, but it is not powerless. Someday it may rule the universe. The

Force is already with it. And so, a new story begins. Clearly, Disney Plus has us hooked. The company will no doubt commercialize and monetize the character as much as it can. But ultimately, the archetype transcends corporate culture and proprietary laws and belongs to humanity as a whole. By dubbing it "Baby Yoda," the world has already taken the first step to claim ownership.

Nazi Tunnels Serve New Purpose

Prior to the outbreak of WW II in 1939, the German Nazis built a vast network of underground fortifications near the Polish border (the Ostwall or East Wall). After the invasion of Poland, the tunnels and bunkers were abandoned. A brief BBC video reports that today they serve a different purpose. They are now part of the Nietoperek Nature Preserve in western Poland and have become the home of the largest hibernation place for bats in Central Europe. Annual counts have found a dozen different bat species and a documented total between 30,000 and 35,000 animals. To protect the bats, the tunnels are closed to the public in winter, but they can be visited in summer. There is also an affiliated war and military museum.

Inspirational Quotes from Great Leaders

- "There is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies." (Winston Churchill)
- "Some men change their party for the sake of their principles; others their principles for the sake of their party." (Winston Churchill)
- "May we pursue that right – without self-righteousness. May we know unity – without conformity. May we grow in strength – without pride of self. May we, in our dealings with all people of the earth, ever speak the truth and serve justice. May the light of freedom, coming to all darkened lands, flame brightly – until at last the darkness is no more." (Dwight Eisenhower)
- "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young." (Henry Ford)
- "The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government." (Thomas Jefferson)
- "You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist." (Golda Meir)
- "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little." (Franklin D. Roosevelt)
- "Become a possibilitarian. No matter how dark things seem to be or actually are, raise your sights and see possibilities – always see them, for they're always there." (Norman Vincent Peale)
- "No man is above the law and no man below it." (Theodore Roosevelt)
- "The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others. There is no higher religion than human service. To work for the common good is the greatest creed." (Albert Schweitzer)
- "Liberty has never come from the government. Liberty has always come from the subjects of it. The history of liberty is a history of resistance." (Woodrow Wilson)

the new year

the new year ushers in
and sends the old year packing
it failed to meet expectations
and was sorely lacking

let's hope the coming year
will rise better to the occasion
lead to peace and prosperity
and heal the divided nation

let's try to find common ground
and resolve to be more civil
under the reign of anger and hate
democracy will surely shrivel