

# OPINION

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**Mail:** LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, THE LEADER PO BOX 1017 CORNING, NY 14830  
**Fax:** 607-936-9939  
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Online at [www.the-leader.com/opinions](http://www.the-leader.com/opinions)

## OUR VIEW

# Corning area's renaissance hits home stretch

Over the past several years, a wide array of major projects have been transforming the greater Corning area in many key areas, improving health care facilities, schools, roads and bridges, parks, museums, our biggest employer, and the downtown business district.

Hardly a news flash, as we've covered many groundbreaking ceremonies and done many project updates.

But we should step back and take a look at the big picture, because it's remarkable to have so many construction projects going on at the same time, and many of them are done or heading for completion in 2014.

Let's start with health care.

There's the new \$146 million Guthrie Corning Hospital and the adjacent Guthrie Cancer Center rising in East Corning, set to open in July.

Education? The new Corning-Painted Post High School and Corning-Painted Post Middle School will open in September, concluding a \$97 million project (with more facilities work at Memorial Stadium and the six elementary schools ahead).

The Addison school district is beginning a \$23 million facilities project, and the Campbell-Savona school district will wrap up \$20 million worth of improvements this year, by the way.

Corning Community College opened a \$16 million new residence hall last year and will break ground soon on a \$20 million project that will overhaul its library and Commons.

Infrastructure? The \$235 million project to stretch Interstate 99 from the Pennsylvania border to the I-86 interchange at Painted Post is done. The state DOT's \$19 million Patterson Bridge replacement will be done in May. The city of Corning opened the rehabbed Centerway Bridge and new Corning Transportation Center late last year.

Museums? The Corning Museum of Glass — which pulls in 400,000 visitors a year from all over the

world — will finish its \$64 million new wing in December, with a new contemporary glass art gallery and hot glass theater.

Parks? Corning Inc. funded the new 10-acre Fallbrook Park on Tioga Avenue, and the small Buechner Park on Denison Parkway. Canfield Park on the city's Southside will get a face-lift this summer.

Downtown? Preservation-minded developers and architects keep overhauling Market Street buildings, with new storefronts and upscale upper-floor apartments.

Corning Inc.? The company is wrapping up a multi-year \$400 million expansion at its Sullivan Park research and development campus, and construction is underway on an expansion of its heavy-duty diesel plant in Erwin, pegged at well over \$200 million. Those projects mean hundreds of local jobs.

This isn't even a full list, but those are the biggies. These are cornerstones, things that make Corning a nice place to live, things that keep people here.

And it's all being happening during the slow recovery from a deep recession.

Corning Inc. drives a lot of it. We've also got people who've been smart and aggressive about getting state and federal dollars to flow here. People who've kept focused on the long term.

Is everything rosy? Of course not. Taxes are high, the job market's tight, a lot of people are struggling. But it's OK to look at the full half of the glass now and then.

So what's next? The city of Corning is developing a strategy to improve the aging housing stock, which is much needed but will be a slow process. The current Corning Hospital will be a key redevelopment site.

And we've got to figure out a new funding plan for the Southeast Steuben County Library. Nobody likes more taxes, but it's too valuable of a resource to let close again. A progressive community with this much going for it should have a good public library.

## WEEKLY COLUMN | SEN. TOM O'MARA

# A long walk ahead for New York's economy

The weather sure hasn't been cooperating to help us truly turn the corner into warmer days and milder nights, but more and more of us are still doing our best to get outside for a little fishing, a bike ride or a long walk on the trail.

That appears to be an ever-growing trend around the nation -- and a very positive one at that, I would add.

Last week in this column I spun off the fact that volunteerism nationwide is at a 10-year low, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. This declining number of volunteers is having a particularly negative impact on our volunteer fire departments, and it's a disturbing trend.

But one trend on the upswing, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Outdoor Foundation, is the nation's participation in outdoor recreation.

It's at a six-year high based upon the findings of the foundation's 7th annual "Outdoor Recreation Participation Report," which is an extremely positive development for many reasons, including that it's good for the economy.

Here at home, for example, we know that "getting outdoors" is critical for our leading tourism industry. And getting outdoors is taking place in a lot of different ways that we need to keep encouraging, and growing.

The regional grape and wine industry goes on attracting visitors by the millions. The latest economic study sponsored by the state Wine and Grape Foundation showed that the economic impact of grapes, grape juice and wine in New York State was \$4.8 billion. A more recent ABC News ranking put our Finger Lakes region as one of the Top 10 "must-visit stops" on a wine tour of the world.

We also know that past U.S. Fish & Wildlife



SEN. TOM O'MARA

Service surveys have revealed the huge economic impact of the nearly 90 million Americans who fish, hunt or engage in other wildlife-related recreation. It's an equally significant impact in New York State where hunting, fishing and trapping are deeply rooted as part of our region's culture, experience and tradition. According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, New York's more than one million sportsmen and sportswomen generate nearly \$2 billion worth of statewide economic activity and directly create 28,000 jobs.

And we can't forget the importance of our regional parks and trails.

New York can boast of one of America's outstanding systems of state parks, including a network of historic sites, parks and trails throughout the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions

that are second to none.

We'll have a great opportunity in a few weeks to help celebrate (and improve at the same time) this amazing network of outdoor opportunities.

Saturday, May 3rd might be best known as Kentucky Derby Day this year, but it's also "I Love My Park Day" in New York. Sponsored by the advocacy organization Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), the event is aimed at encouraging volunteer efforts to enhance New York's parks and historic sites and promote the entire park system. Events will take place statewide and regionally, including along the Catharine Valley Trail, and at Stony Brook State Park and the Ithaca Dog Park at Allan H. Treman Marine State Park.

Additional "I Love My Park Day" information, including an online registration process, can be found on the PTNY website, [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org). A link to the website is also on my Senate website, [www.omara.nysenate.gov](http://www.omara.nysenate.gov).

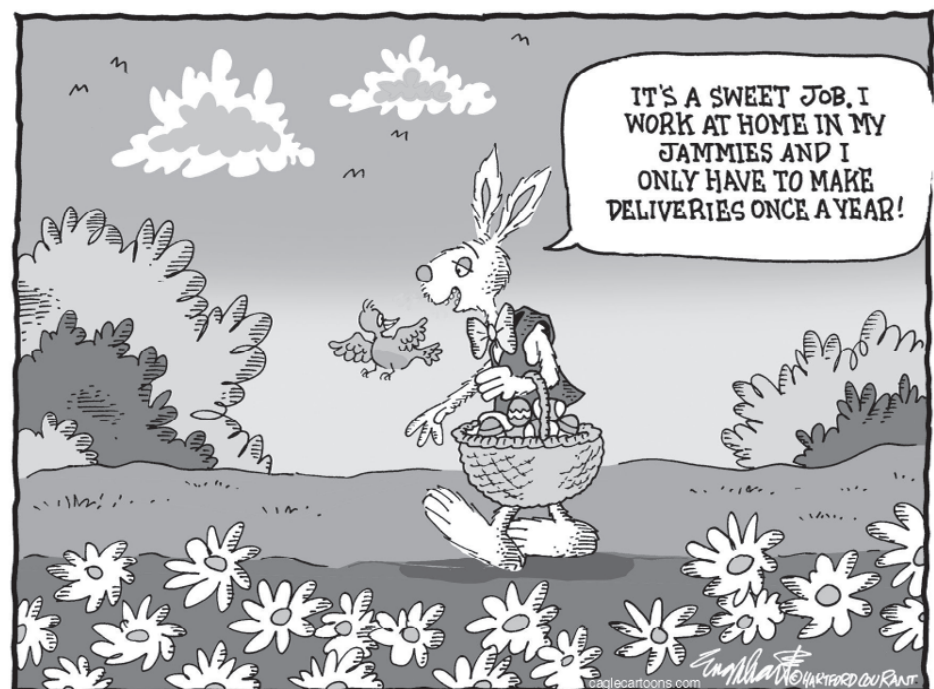
It's a meaningful initiative that supports one of the state's most worthwhile commitments. The

recently enacted 2014-15 state budget includes more than \$90 million in additional funding for improvements to the state's parks and historic sites. We know it's a wise investment. A past PTNY study has pegged the economic impact of New York's 178 state parks, 35 historic sites, 1,350 miles of hiking trails and over 8,000 campsites (not to mention boat launches, beaches, swimming pools and nature centers) at nearly \$2 billion in revenue, almost \$500 million in employment income and 20,000 jobs. Reports from the state Office of Parks and Recreation continue to show strong attendance at state parks and historic sites.

So the trend toward getting outdoors clearly promises to set some strong, favorable economic winds blowing in the direction of the long-term rebuilding of New York State's economy.

*State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 58th Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and part of Tompkins County.*

## ANOTHER VIEW



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Tom Reed is working for the future

TO THE EDITOR | These days, the financial health of our great country is held hostage to partisan politics. With unemployment at an all time high, we are missing out on the contributions those individuals income tax would make towards our country, and are instead funneling more money into entitlement programs and digging a bigger hole that our future generations will never be able to dig out of. With big government encouraging people to live on handouts they are discouraged from becoming all that they are capable of being. This is both sad and serious.

We need to reelect Tom Reed to Congress because our country needs people willing to make the tough decisions.

Congressman Tom Reed seems to be one of the only members in New York that recognizes the

threat we face. We are over \$17 trillion in debt. The very interest we pay on this debt is going to reach over \$880 billion in the next ten years.

Tom is facing a liberal opponent out of Ithaca that is willing to vote hand in hand with the extreme liberals that refuse to acknowledge the financial crisis we face. We cannot continue voting to spend more than we take in, and refusing to look at the out-of-control government programs and operations. Each day our debt increases and each minute the interest alone is enough to cripple our economy for years to come. Tom is willing to stand up for future generations and do whatever necessary to highlight waste, fraud and abuse. We need Reed back in the House to continue fighting for families in Western New York.

Carla Westerlund  
Greenhurst

### Corning's homeless need more help

TO THE EDITOR | Since the end of last year, a small group of concerned residents have been meeting to discuss the homeless situation in Corning, and to possibly find a solution.

We first began by trying to identify the problem, and how it is different from the stereotype of homelessness in large cities. We concluded that for our community the homeless includes the young and those who are working but unable to afford permanent housing.

At our latest meeting, we focused on a concrete action that we could take to address the situation.

A local resource center for the homeless can be a place where those who do not have housing can have access to phones, Internet, mailboxes, and laundry services with the potential of emergency

bed space and a pick-up location for work opportunities. This would help those who are homeless by giving them the tools that can empower them. For the one thing we discovered in our discussions is that any solution, long-term or short-term, must include the homeless person as an active participant in their own lives rather than be subjected to an external control no matter how helpful the service in question might be.

A sense of ownership in the process must be fostered. People's inherent desire for independence should not be used against them as an excuse not to address the problem in our area. Another meeting is planned for May, and I hope that others will join us in formulating a solution that benefits the entire community.

Darin Robbins  
Corning

## The LEADER

The Leader (ISSN #10501983)  
The Leader is published daily at  
34 West Pulteney Street, Corning,  
New York 14830  
by Liberty Group Corning  
Holdings, Inc. Periodical postage  
paid at Corning, N.Y. 14830-0817.  
USPS code | 0586-160

Postmaster:  
Send address changes to  
The Leader, West Pulteney Street,  
Corning, New York 14830

**Publisher**  
Phil Husick | Group Publisher  
936-4651, Ext. 303  
phusick@the-leader.com

**Editorial**  
Stella DuPree | Managing editor  
936-4651, Ext. 361  
sdupree@the-leader.com

**Advertising**  
Adam Mingos | Ad director  
936-4651, Ext. 388  
amingos@the-leader.com

**Classifieds** 936-4651, Ext. 651  
**Retail** 936-4651, Ext. 653

**Circulation**  
Elmer Kuehner | Circulation director  
936-4651, Ext. 320

**Postal rates**  
**Steuben County**  
One month \$33.50  
Three months \$100.50  
Six months \$201.00  
One year \$402.00

**ELSEWHERE IN USA**  
One month \$43.00  
Three months \$129.00  
Six months \$258.00  
One year \$516.00

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