

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

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OUR VIEW

Grins and groans

Grin

A grin to our community firefighters, many of whom responded in subzero temperatures twice last week to battle early-morning fires.

The first was a tragic fire that killed a tenant in a downtown Bath apartment. Firefighters battled the blaze for hours and kept it from spreading to nearby businesses.

Three firefighters suffered minor injuries in the process.

Departments were called out 24 hours later when a chimney fire spread to an attic of a Town of Bath residence.

We salute the emergency personnel who battled the elements as well as the blazes: Firefighters from Bath, Bath VA, Hammond-sport, Kanona, Savona, Prattsburgh, Campbell, Cohocton, Avoca, Pulteney and Wayne departments, as well as personnel from the Steuben County Office of Emergency Management, Bath Ambulance, police agencies and fire investigation teams.

Most of you are volunteers who risk your lives to keep our loved ones safe but ask for nothing in return.

We cannot thank you enough.

A groan

To the impending closure of the Philips Lighting

plant in Bath.

When production ceases on March 28, the 225 employees that remain will be out of work.

"It's been a long road," said Matthew Pelletier, president of the United Steelworkers Local 1013T.

We bet is has.

Plans to close the Bath facility were announced in late 2012. At the time, there were 280 employees, including 215 union workers.

Delays kept the facility open a few months longer than expected, giving the workers who remain a brief reprieve. But soon, the doors will close for good.

Some will retire, while others will rely on severance packages and unemployment checks until they can find work.

It won't be easy. There aren't many comparable jobs to be had in the area, and some will be forced to uproot their families.

The impact of the Philips' closure will be felt throughout the region.

The plant is up for sale. Hopefully, the site will attract a business that will help fill the void. Soon.

A grin

To temperatures above 40 degrees.

Time to break out the flip flops, shorts and sunglasses!

But we wouldn't put the shovels and ice melt away just yet.

WEEKLY COLUMN | SEN. TOM O'MARA

A busy week in Albany

Getting the word out isn't the easiest task to accomplish at this time of year, especially when a barrel full of issues start heating up like they did last week at the Capitol. If any of you happened to be in Albany recently, here's just a little of what you might have seen or heard:

■ In politics, Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino officially threw his hat into the ring as the potential Republican candidate to challenge Governor Andrew Cuomo this fall — a day before a prominent new statewide poll (NBC 4 New York/Wall Street Journal/Marist) showed that while the governor's favorability rating stayed strong at 63%, his job performance rating among voters statewide fell to its lowest level at 42% (among upstate voters, only 35% rated the governor's job performance as excellent or good).

■ In government, statewide organizations representing mayors, counties, towns and school boards came out against the governor's proposed property tax freeze, as it's currently constructed, and offered some ideas they believe would make it more effective in the long run for local property taxpayers.

■ On the advocacy front, county and town highway superintendents donned their orange T-shirts and converged like a tidal wave



SEN. TOM O'MARA

of color on the Capitol for their annual "Local Roads Matter" lobby week. Assemblyman Phil Palmesano and I joined them as we continue to promote a bipartisan coalition within the Legislature for a stronger state commitment to local roads and bridges as a matter of economic growth, job creation, property tax relief and motorist safety.

■ Legislatively, the Senate began building on last year's "Grown In New York" tax and regulatory reform plan to strengthen the state's leading agricultural industry, and unveiled a new "Young Farmers NY" strategy to recognize that the average age of farmers in New York and nationally is fast approaching 60 and we need to do more to attract young farmers to keep agriculture strong for the future.

■ The signs — and the shouts — of government were everywhere. Repeal the SAFE Act. Start hydrofracking. No drilling. Save charter schools. More pre-K. Lower taxes. Fewer unfunded state mandates. We need jobs.

The point is that if you're involved in this year's legislative process in any way

at all, it's easy to get pulled in a hundred different directions. Inevitably, some worthwhile bulletins on the news and notes board go unnoticed.

That's why I'll take a short break from commenting on the purely political and governmental and share a reminder that March is Women's History Month in New York State. As part of this celebration, the State Senate is once again conducting our annual "Women of Distinction" program to pay tribute to local women making a difference in communities statewide.

The Senate's been paying this tribute to local women for 17 consecutive years and it's steadily evolved into one of the Legislature's most noteworthy recognitions. I certainly look forward to this annual opportunity to honor an outstanding area citizen from my 58th Senate District, which covers all of Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties, and part of Tompkins County (the city and town of Ithaca, and the towns of Enfield, Newfield and Ulysses).

In 2011, my first year in the Senate, our inaugural "Woman of Distinction" was Carol Berry of Hornell, a longtime regional library professional and director of the Dormann Library in Bath.

Virginia "Ginny" Houseknecht of Watkins Glen, a local Cornell Cooperative Extension educator and leader, and founder of the

Southern Tier Parkinson's Disease Support Group, was next in 2012. And last year, we paid tribute to Beverly "Bev" Stamp, co-owner and operator of Lakewood Vineyards in Schuyler County, and a beloved ambassador of New York State's nationally and internationally renowned wine and grape industry.

All of the above are certainly representative of the quality of the "Woman of Distinction" tribute.

The deadline for submitting a nomination this year is Monday, March 24, 2014. There's an online nomination process on my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov (click on the "Women of Distinction" icon in the left-hand column of the home page). Forms can also be obtained by emailing a request to omara@nysenate.com, or by calling my office in Elmira (607-735-9671), Bath (607-776-3201), or Albany (518-455-2091).

We all know someone who makes an enormous difference to the community at large. Whether she is a service provider, a teacher going above and beyond the call of duty, a businesswoman, or simply a community resident known for her good deeds, I'd like to see her recognized.

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.

LETTER

Backyard garden feeds the need

TO THE EDITOR | I am entering a new phase of my life, and once again am espousing the importance of having a backyard garden.

I cannot drive to the grocery store. How can I manage three meals a day?

I am fortunate — I have a freezer filled with fresh fruits, tomato juice, applesauce, soups, veggies,

harvested and frozen at their peak from my backyard garden.

A backyard garden sustained my family during the Great Depression of '29, the terrible years of World War II, the Flood of '72, and now it is sustaining me during my declining years.

Think about it. If I can do it, you can do it. Take that first step.

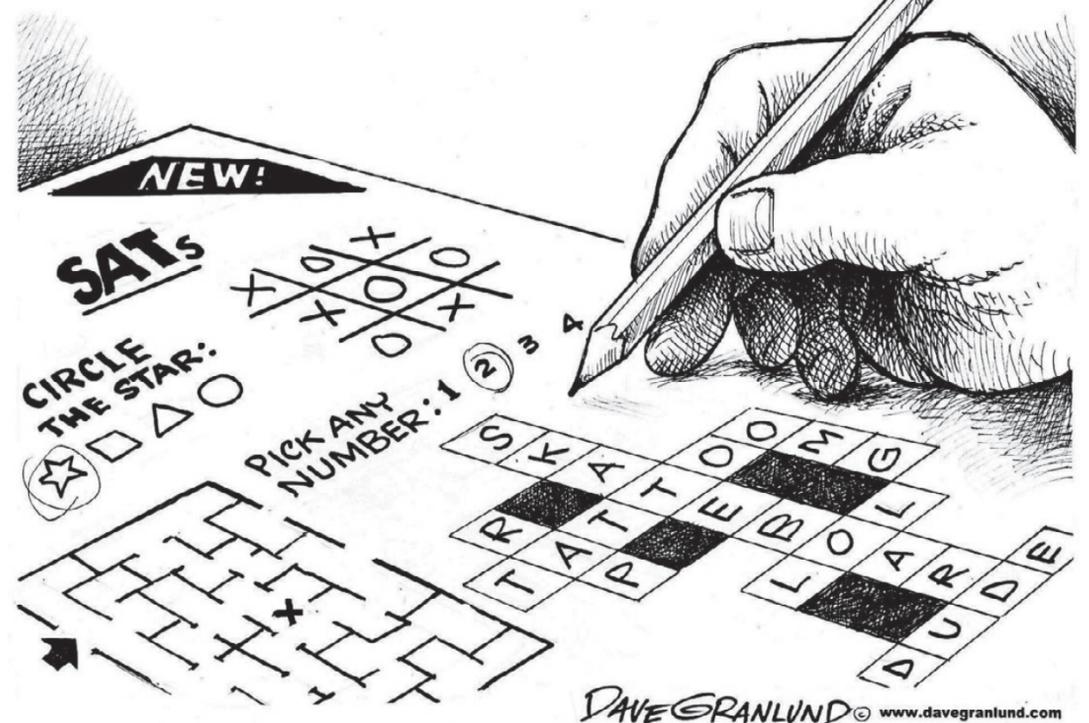
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ANOTHER VIEW

Revised Scholastic Aptitude Test...



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reed gets it right most of the time

TO THE EDITOR | Fact: Sometimes tornadoes damage trailer parks.

Fact: Sometimes airplanes fly over trailer parks.

This doesn't mean that the airplanes were formed by the tornadoes rearranging the trailers.

Airplanes and trailers are two different species. Evolution doesn't work that way.

Our representative Reed has voted on the right side of the issues 60 percent of the time and he represents the people of this district.

Our senators, who represent New York State,

not the people, have voted on the right side of the issues zero percent of the time.

If you want to vote for someone who is a lot crazier than Reed, vote for me.

I have a college degree in environmental science.

Carl Hand
 Addison

Students protect environment

TO THE EDITOR | It's great to discover that our children are learning about philanthropy and the role that citizens play in supporting a vibrant community.

The Friends of the

Chemung River Watershed recently discovered this, when three youth groups each donated \$100 to help us protect and promote our waterways and environment.

The children are from Mrs. Schiefen's fourth grade class at Big Flats Elementary School, Mrs. Oplinger's kindergarten class at Holy Family Elementary School in Elmira and Girl Scout Troop 102 in Corning.

The donations are part of a program by the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes to visit 100 classrooms in Chemung, Steuben and Schuyler counties in 2014 to teach students about

philanthropy, grant writing and how to address the daily needs they see in the community. Each class then decides to donate a \$100 grant, from the community foundation, to a regional nonprofit organization of their choice to address one of those needs.

River Friends thanks the children who donated to us and we thank the Community Foundation for its efforts to educate our future leaders about the importance of partnerships and giving back to the community.

Jim Pfiffer
 executive director
 Friends of the Chemung River Watershed

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