

OPINION

TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

Serving up a few thoughts on tourism



Tom O'Mara

According to Empire State Development, tourism is now New York's third-largest employer – attracting nearly 245 million visitors annually and producing an economic impact of nearly \$110 billion. In other words, tourism is big business. Throughout the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions, according to industry analysts, it accounts for upwards of 60,000 jobs. For those of us born and raised locally – or for

anyone who has lived here for any extended period of time – tourism equates to so much more than dollars and cents. The industry, in all of its many sectors, largely defines our culture. It is woven into the fabric of our lives, as well as being the foundation of so many locally based traditions. We are wise, then, to take every opportunity to celebrate it and showcase it – which is what we did last week at the state capital. Assemblyman Phil Palmesano and I, along with legislative colleagues, hosted the New York Wine Industry Association's (NYWIA) 6th Annual "Sip and Sample" tasting event. This event has steadily grown into one of the State Legislature's top

efforts to show off New York State-made wines, cheeses, and other food products. This year the tasting featured wineries, cheesemakers, and other food manufacturers from the Finger Lakes, Hudson Valley, Long Island, the Capital Region, and Central New York. NYWIA's new president, Erica Paolicelli, Co-owner of Three Brothers Wineries & Estates in the Finger Lakes, said, "Our association advocates for stability and advancement of the wine industry in New York through advocacy. The 'Sip and Sample' event is an amazing opportunity for our members to showcase their products." We are proud to help support these winemakers,

cheese producers, and other food manufacturers by promoting the excellence of their products. For example, I have said repeatedly over the years that New York's grape and wine industry is one of our greatest-of-all success stories. From the brink of disaster a generation ago, the industry today is renowned statewide, nationally, and internationally. In fact, the New York Wine & Grape Foundation estimates the state's grape, grape juice, and wine industries annually generate more than \$13 billion in overall economic benefits to New York. If you're familiar with the industry, then you appreciate how much has gone into the industry's transformation, at so many levels, including the

level of advocacy, public awareness, and education – areas where NYWIA (nywineindustryassociation.com), the Wine & Grape Foundation (newyorkwines.org) and others have made and continue to make such a difference. Of course, the rise of the wine industry has helped sparked the ongoing emergence of the Finger Lakes Cheese Alliance (flxcheese.com) and a statewide cheese industry that can boast of being the fourth largest in America. In fact, one of the region's signature events is the annual Finger Lakes Cheese Festival at Sunset View Creamery in Odessa (Schuyler County), which takes place this year on Saturday, July 27. Find out more at flxcheese.com. In addition, never

overlook the steady work of organizations like the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance (fingerlakes.org), proudly celebrating its 100th anniversary this year and marking a century of encouraging the industry to keep working together towards common goals that strengthen all. Therefore, yes, it is more than worthwhile to help show off the quality of these outstanding New York State products. These industries are economic engines for a great number of rural, upstate communities. They provide good, sustainable livelihoods for thousands of New Yorkers. Most importantly, their growth and success remain a story in the making.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mueller wasn't seeking justice

To the Editor, Trump is no angel, but by far not the worst of Washington rancid with stench of a long rotting swamp! Trump scapegoated for swamp failures, incompetence over decades. Justice absent from Mueller's probe of Russian collusion! A gossip based investigation with information planted by a deep state government cabal of anti-Trumpers to nullify a presidential election. Can there be obstruction of justice where there is no justice? Mueller knew within six months Trump did not collude with Russia. Yet Mueller's lengthy dragnet avoided obvious Hillary Clinton conniving with Russian entities, his purpose to lynch Trump: protect Hillary. Certainly Trump's rapid fire rhetoric endangers himself with the obstruction of justice charge. Still many legal experts say charges by democrats are

unfounded, illegitimate, and silly. With no crime found, what is obstructed? Is justice a bias, investigative attack council of haters against Trump, vigilante thugs digging dirt setting up Trump for a Democrat "Kangaroo Court" lynching to impeach him? No, it is not. Perhaps under such conditions injustice needs to be obstructed. Representative Adam Schiff of California accuses, Trump with his words fooled the American people. Schiff lied about having incontrovertible evidence of Trump's Russian collusion and was a prime perpetuator of the fabrication costing American taxpayers \$35 million for a false and phony investigation. Who lied and obstructed justice? Democrats and media, power crazed nattering nabobs of nasty corruption like Nadler, fomenting a coup d'état. Vigilantes harassing Trump, Democrats, media, academe, and Hollywood profit greatly from the

Washington swamp. Trump's attempt to drain the swamp threatens their goose that lays the golden eggs for them and theirs. Like rats backed into a corner, they viciously went for Trump's throat. Justice the furthest from prosecutor Mueller's mind, his goals deleting Trump, taring, feathering, and running him out on a rail.

Gerald J. Furnkranz Millport

Lawlor a strong district proponent

To the Editor, I am writing to support Margie Lawlor for Corning-Painted Post school board. I have had the privilege of working with Margie many times since I started at Multi Media Services in 2000. She has always been active in our community as a volunteer and has worked for both the United Way and ProAction of Steuben and Yates Counties. She has been a strong proponent of the school district and both of her sons have graduated and are currently student athletes in college. My wife and I are business owners and homeowners in Corning. Our daughter is currently in the 9th grade at CPP, which we feel is the best high school in our area. We want a board that is active and willing to

make difficult, but necessary decisions regarding budgets. A strong board should set the vision and goals of our school district and adopt policies to achieve those goals. We are confident that Margie will take ownership of her role as a board member and provide reasoned discourse with other school board members to keep our school district pointed in the right direction.

Dan Flatt MBA Corning Backing Lawlor, Belanger, Franklin

To the Editor, We are fortunate to have such a strong slate of candidates endorsed by the Corning Teacher's Association for the May 21st school board/budget vote. Kristina Belanger and Mary Franklin have served the students of this district so well and are generously devoting themselves to another three years on the school board. New candidate Margie Lawlor has so many qualities which will bring value to the district. She has been immersed in the district as both a parent and as a consultant. She does her homework on issues, actively listens to different points of view, and is passionate about the causes and projects she takes on. Margie will be a great add to the Board of Education to continue the really positive work they've been doing for our children. Please join me in voting

for Lawlor, Belanger and Franklin on May 21st.

Chris Sharkey Painted Post

Re-elect Rusak for Bath BOE

To the Editor, On May 21st, Amey Rusak will be seeking reelection to the Bath Central School District Board of Education. Amey is a 1986 graduate of the Haverling High School and a life-long resident of Bath. She has three daughters, two graduated from Haverling and one currently enrolled. Amey has been invested in our community her entire life, and five years ago she took it to another level by running for a seat on the Bath Board of Education. She has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Board. Her everyday work at Pro Action deals with helping people of all ages change their lives by trying to address the causes and conditions of poverty. In 2015, Amey was awarded the Champion for Youth Award by the Steuben County Youth Bureau for an outstanding job of supporting youth programs in Steuben County. This is the type of real life experience we need on the Board. It is also very important to note is that while Amey has been on the Board, the total tax levy increased only 2.3% -- over five years. That's an incredibly low 0.46% average yearly increase. This shows

Amey and the entire Board are truly thinking about the taxpayers of this community while still offering extensive educational and extra-curricular programs. I have known Amey for over 40 years and she is one of the most caring people I have ever met. She has been an outstanding Board Member and I hope you will join me in supporting her on May 21st so she can continue helping and supporting our District and Community. **Matt Hill Bath** **Lawlor getting my support**

To the Editor, Having worked closely with Margie Lawlor as a professional colleague for more than 15 years, I wholeheartedly recommend her to serve on the Corning-Painted Post Board of Education. Margie is passionate about creating positive environments for children and ensuring they have constructive learning experiences. She is highly knowledgeable about the conditions children and youth need for healthy growth and development, and skilled at working within complex systems to improve the effectiveness of programs and services. Margie is an analytical thinker and problem-solver, who also happens to have a huge heart filled with compassion and concern for all people, and especially those in disadvantaged circumstances. Through her record of volunteer and professional service, Margie has demonstrated her commitment to giving every young person the best possible chance for success in life. She highly values public education as a major factor in creating that opportunity. As a school board member, Margie will be an exceptional advocate for students, teachers and the school district as a whole. Please join me in voting for Margie Lawlor for C-PP School Board on May 21st.

Carla Hibbard Lindley

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