

OPINION

COMMENTARY | STEUBEN COUNTY MANAGER JACK WHEELER

Recognizing the impact of volunteer service

At age 75, Mary Ann Chura of Hornell could be expected to live a quiet life of retirement. Instead, she volunteers approximately 8 hours a week as an RSVP volunteer helping needy kids develop early literacy skills. She also volunteers another 3 hours a week giving older adults a ride to the grocery store and medical appointments when they are no longer able to drive. Mary is using her lifetime of experience to put young people on a path to success and enable

our seniors to maintain their independence at home in just a few short hours each week.

Mary is just one example of how Steuben County citizens are making a difference through national service. Altogether, about 400 Senior Corps/RSVP volunteers are serving in Steuben County, tackling tough challenges including food insecurity, services to veterans, assisting seniors to safely age in their homes, and bridging the education gap.

As the Steuben County Manager, I am grateful for the dedication and sacrifice of these every day heroes, who are helping make our great county safer, stronger, and healthier. I have seen their impact first-hand, and know that national service is a cost-effective strategy to meet critical community needs.

That's why I am pleased to join others across the county in celebrating National Service Recognition Day. We are taking time to recognize the impact

of national service and thank those who serve on this day during National Volunteer Week.

Given the many challenges facing our communities, local leaders are increasingly turning to national service and volunteerism to help meet local needs. We know that engaging citizens is a smart strategy to make progress on issues important to local communities.

A key partner in our efforts is the Corporation for National and Community Service

(CNCS), the federal agency for volunteering, service, and civic engagement. The agency oversees the AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, engaging millions of Americans in service each year. CNCS works hand-in-hand with counties, cities, nonprofits, and other local partners to support high-impact national service at more than 50,000 locations across the country.

Here in Steuben County, about 400 Senior Corps volunteers serve at 60 different organizations

throughout the county. National service shows the best of the American spirit - people turning toward problems instead of away, and working together to find common solutions. Today, as we thank national service members for their commitment, let us all pledge to do our part to strengthen Steuben County through service and volunteering.

If you are 55+ years of age and interested in joining Steuben County RSVP, please contact them at (607) 664-2298.

COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA, R-BIG FLATS

An empty corner of the ring for Upstate

When the Legislature's fiscal committees began public hearings on Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2019-2020 proposed state budget back in February, I raised a few red flags.

One was that the governor had proposed the elimination of a \$65-million "Extreme Winter Recovery" allocation that has become essential for counties, towns, and villages to maintain local roads and bridges. On top of the cut, the governor also proposed to keep funding flat for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program, better known as CHIPS - the main source of state aid for local highway departments.

In light of Governor Cuomo's cuts, I asked, who would be in the corner of our local highways departments to stand up and speak out for stronger - and desperately needed - state investment.

Keep in mind, an October 2017 report from the state comptroller found that bridges owned by local governments currently need an estimated \$2.4 billion in repairs. In an earlier study, the state Association of Town Superintendents of Highways (NYSAOTSOH) estimated that New York would need to invest an additional \$1.3 billion per year on local roads and bridges to prevent them from becoming deficient.

Remember, as well, that municipalities own and maintain 87% of the roads

in the state, 52% of New York's 18,000 bridges, and that 48% of the vehicle miles driven in the state are on local roads.

In March, at the height of budget season, more than 600 local highway superintendents and highway department employees from throughout New York were in Albany as part of the annual "Local Roads Matter" advocacy campaign. As part of this effort since 2013, I have joined Assemblyman Phil Palmesano and many of our legislative colleagues to call for increased state support for local roads, bridges, and culverts.

The "Local Roads Matter" campaign has made a difference. It has helped increase funding through the CHIPS

program by nearly 40%.

In a March 4 letter to Governor Cuomo and legislative leaders, we wrote, "Local governments, for the foreseeable future, will continue to struggle to address budgetary demands in the face of the state-imposed property tax cap, rising pension and health care costs, and unfunded state mandates, among other burdens. Furthermore, despite the state's increased commitment to CHIPS since 2013, base aid has remained stagnant over the past seven years. There is clearly a compelling case for New York State to address urgent local transportation and infrastructure shortcomings, and we believe it is simply the right thing to do. In order to meet the critical

investment level needed to maintain and improve local roads, bridges, and culverts, a stronger state-local partnership is the only answer."

I believed we made a strong case for a stronger state-local partnership. After all, Governor Cuomo is now out there touting that the final 2019-20, \$175 BILLION state budget funds "the nation's largest infrastructure program" at \$150 BILLION over the next five years. The governor's out there hanging his hat on the \$25 BILLION this new budget will generate for the downstate, largely New York City subway system.

Yet this year's state budget, when the Democrats were finally

done negotiating it in the middle of the night early last week, includes not a penny more for CHIPS. That's right, not a penny more. Worse, the final budget cuts the \$65-million "Extreme Winter Recovery" allocation - as if our Upstate region never experienced winter this season.

It's a disgrace, but it's also a strong, strong reminder - among many in this new budget - of what New York State government under one-party, New York City-based control holds in store for the Southern Tier, Finger Lakes, and every upstate region.

There's no one left standing in our corner - which means we're going to have fight for ourselves like never before.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Help take care of our parks

To the Editor,

It is now spring and the time we begin to start enjoying outside activities.

We are fortunate to have seven parks within our city for everyone to enjoy.

Children especially, like to run, laugh, play on the equipment and roll down the hills as they get some of their daily exercise. Adults enjoy walking through the parks, enjoying the scenery and being outside.

I would encourage each of us to help take care of these parks we enjoy by disposing of the garbage (boxes, papers, bottles, wrappers) from a party, picnic or meeting, etc. into the receptacles that are provided for our convenience.

When walking dogs, please pick up after them as there is a city ordinance that requires this and there is a possible fine if you do not.

This is extremely helpful so children running, rolling and having a good time do not come in contact with feces that is left as a result of adults not doing their duty as a responsible pet owner by cleaning up after their dog(s).

This will also prevent people from accidentally stepping in it and the mowing machines spreading it.

Let's work together. If each of us will do our share in keeping the areas clean, we can all enjoy safe, pleasant, enjoyable times in the parks.

**Janet Siebert
Corning**

Education system unconcerned with educating

To the Editor,

Call me an old crank, but when I was in school political leanings of teachers were unknown.

They taught disciplines building our minds, not manipulating them.

Our Education System has become money centric unconcerned with educating. An incestuous alliance between the education industry, government and main stream media indoctrinates. Disarming students of common sense and critical thinking, stripping individuality, shackling them with dependence.

The "Education Industry" executes major roles promoting socialist agendas, exploiting pre-k through advanced degrees for brainwashing. While professing critical thinking, they criticize, attacking those thinking independently. Like failed strategies of National Socialist Germany and Soviet Socialist Russia, they commandeered education, propagandizing the minds of our youth, for profit and power.

Teachers unions and administrator associations place selfish agendas well above education of our youth, dismantling learning processes that strengthened the mind replaced with ones that erode the brain.

Good teachers often driven to mediocrity and worse by powerful union intimidation.

Like government the education industry has formulated methods for profiting in failure, installing mechanisms to subvert education, leeching more money to feign repairing their sabotage!

Filling the minds of the young with "education should be fun", softening them with toys and games, bastardizing what used to be disciplines.

Education was to enhance how to think not indoctrinating what to think.

The miracle educator of the computer was sold as a brain builder, in reality a

brain killer.

Liberal diagnosing children with ADD and ADHD plying them with drugs to subdue independent restless energy normal to childhood.

Trading multiplication and division tables and cursive writing for mindless electronics and thumb driven texting.

Redefining "Integrity" with nebulously undefined "Quality of Character"!

Self-anointed intellectuals, educators crowning themselves saviors of the future, their arrogant indoctrination of children may well sentence the children to a debilitating future of hopelessness.

**Gerald J. Furnkranz
Millport**

The Leader



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The April CIRG meeting April 10th • 10 am



will be held at the Corning YMCA on April 10th at 10:00 am. The representative from the Y will explain their services, programs, what is available to Seniors and then take attendees on a tour of the facility. Please call Linda McDonald at 607-368-2244 by April 8th if you plan to attend.

(If school is cancelled or on a 2 hour delay, we will cancel the meeting. Parking available in the YMCA parking lot. All retirees and their family/friends are invited to join us)

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