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# VIEWPOINT

## Quotation for today

The sweetest of all sounds is praise.

Xenophon

## Thought for today

How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing?

Proverbs 1:22

## We need to reinvent ways to help in Erie

**The Issue:** Charitable missions can change

**Our View:** Innovate with fundraising ideas

When volunteers at Connecting Hands hit the \$100,000 mark in fundraising for local charities, they had something to celebrate. That's a lot of money raised in less than four years by a group that began with a dozen people and has grown to 35.

The founders of Connecting Hands met at House of Healing, where they volunteered to help nonviolent female offenders re-enter society. The volunteers assisted in the office, drove clients to appointments and raised money for House of Healing at big garage sales in the warehouse at Connecto Electric, 3716 McClelland Ave.

After House of Healing closed early in 2011, volunteer Pam Will, who owns Connecto Electric with her husband, Jeff, offered to continue the fundraising garage sales to benefit other small, local nonprofits. She also suggested the name, Connecting Hands.

"We worked it out, elected officers, wrote a mission



### WATCH IT

See video about Connecting Hands' sale.

GoErie.com/video

statement and started getting the word out," said volunteer Mary Anne Geary. Banners at the warehouse list charities that have benefited from the sales, including Court Appointed Special Advocates, the Mercy Center, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, L'Arche, Borough Services of Edinboro, the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network and the Erie United Methodist Alliance. When proceeds were tallied after the December garage sale for Emmaus Ministries, volunteers realized they had raised \$100,000 in total.

Connecting Hands shows by example how reinvention can meet changing needs in our community. In a similar vein, the United Way of Erie County decided the agency needed a new pot of money to respond to unexpected needs — a natural disaster such as the 1985 tornadoes, an environmental crisis such as the harmful algae bloom in Toledo, Ohio, in 2014, or a health emer-

gency such as a measles outbreak. The United Way also wanted to be ready to address emerging problems, ranging from Erie's gun violence to serving Erie County's aging population.

"We can't give out what we don't have," said Bill Jackson, United Way president. The emergency fund will be built up by reducing funding by 10 percent a year, for three years, from \$1.5 million allocated to 18 agencies.

Meeting with the Erie Times-News Editorial Board, United Way staffers and board members made an impressive case on the need for an emergency fund. Phasing in the cuts should also help the affected nonprofits adjust their budgets. The changes could also inspire other groups to come up with innovative ways to help the region's charities, the way Connecting Hands did.

The next Connecting Hands sale will benefit Strings for a Cure, which helps cancer patients. The sale is Friday from 3 to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For information on how to donate good quality household items for future sales, call Lil Laskowski at 833-3753 or 572-5953 or visit Connecting Hands on Facebook.

## YOUR VIEW

### Letters to the Editor

### G.I. Bill built middle class

Michael A. MacDowell's article "Free community college idea won't work" is bogus (Feb. 19). Apparently, he never heard of the G.I. Bill invoked after World War II.

It not only provided four years of free college to the 16 million veterans, the federal government built dormitories for single and married families at Pennsylvania State University and elsewhere. That was back when there were no tax loopholes and the top 10 percent paid their fair share of taxes. However, if he is referring to the Republicans' "no tax increase," he is correct.

The G.I. Bill was the foundation for building our middle class, which is rapidly disappearing.

Cloyd J. Rose|Erie

### Viaduct park still feasible

Despite the recent City Council votes, the demolition of the McBride Viaduct is unlikely to occur before 2016 or 2017. This reality provides a window for our volunteer work to create a public-private partnership to work with the city to manage the viaduct's future maintenance, liability and security.

Mayor Joe Sinnott's statement that the proposal for an East Avenue McBride Viaduct Park is not "feasible" is a decision Sinnott has justified based on a very flawed study by L.R. Kimball. The LRK engineers were excellent at figuring out ways to move highway traffic, but unprepared to consider urban design issues and the needs of people walking and biking in a city. Both the director of the Erie Art Museum and the superintendent of Erie's public schools support the creation of an East Avenue McBride Viaduct Park because they understand the viaduct's potential to be a place for public art and for community building.

Sinnott has also made statements regarding design feasibility for which he has no substantiation (i.e. the viaduct does not lend itself to a park because it's not flat and it goes through an industrial area). Despite his reluctance to meet with us, we hope to schedule a meeting with him to clarify the viaduct's vital role in urban circulation and its significant potential to spur a revitalization of the struggling East Avenue neighborhoods and businesses.

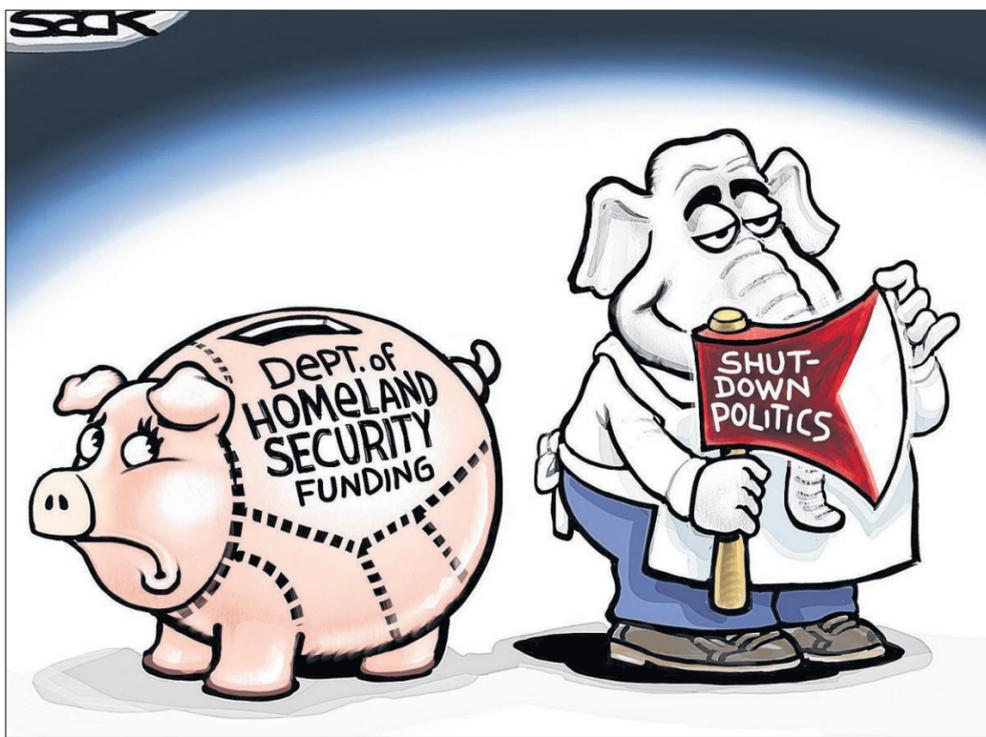
Lastly, it should be noted that the estimated costs for demolition of the viaduct (now \$2.3 million) will likely increase, making the cost to tear it down closer to the cost to stabilize the viaduct (\$3.5 million to \$4.5 million). Both the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the city acknowledge that the \$2.3 million in demolition funds could be transferred to stabilize the viaduct.

Adam Trott and Lisa Austin|Erie

### Congress bows to corporations

If you would like to keep track of what the new Republican Congress is doing for you (or to you), just check out the "How they voted" feature in the front section of the Sunday Erie Times-News.

In the week of Feb. 14, they passed a bill that states if the Keystone XL pipeline is built, all liability for spills will be



### Have your say

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paid with taxpayer dollars, with zero responsibility to a foreign company.

Another bill labeled "Corporate Tax" states that any business that moves overseas to avoid taxes will not be denied any benefits nor suffer any punishment.

Two other bills, titled "Depreciation Breaks" and "Charitable Deductions," are unfunded bills that will add \$79.2 billion to the federal debt. Of course, this will easily be blamed on President Barack Obama.

I can't wait for the next edition to see what the corporations of America are gaining from this new Congress. Or what the middle class is losing.

Charles Blanchard|Erie

### Many blamed for newborn's death

Teri Rhodes deserves a scholarship. How can anyone punish someone for doing what society has been teaching them to do all of their life? The media, the president, the courts and most legislators have been teaching her since she was born, "If a child is going to get in your way, eliminate it."

If anyone thinks Rhodes did anything wrong, they need to stop this trend by setting an example by punishing those who are truly responsible for the war against the children. We can start by putting President Barack Obama in prison for 18 years and then abort everyone who has voted for a legislator who fa-

vors abortion. That will send the proper message of "respect for all individuals" regardless of age or race. I'm sure that will cause a decline in these legalized killings in the U.S., if not the world.

Instead of criticizing her, you should apologize to her for voting for politicians who express their hate for women by telling them it is right to abort fetuses.

You, the voter, did more wrong than she did and now you want to use her for a scapegoat. A quote from a wise man: "With your foolishness, you can justify your every inconsistency." Look to forgive her rather than condemn yourself. John 8:7, Psalm 53:1.

Darwin Spare|Erie

### Pipeline shows that money talks

China has 56 percent more money invested in the tar sands of Canada than any other foreign nation. The Koch brothers have large investments in the tar sands leases and refineries on the Gulf, but the Kochs had the wisdom to buy the Republican Congress.

In the U.S., there has already been more than a dozen spills. People in Arkansas have witnessed their shiny oiled yards and the largest inland oil spill in our history pollute the Kalamazoo River. Americans have spent more than \$53 million in that cleanup and we are not finished.

In the first week of February, a Demo-

cratic amendment to the Keystone XL pipeline bill was shot down in the U.S. House of Misrepresentatives. Democrats proposed that owners and investors in XL should cover the cost of oil spill cleanups.

Every House Republican voted against this common-sense amendment. Why would anyone want Americans to use our tax dollars on pipeline spills, but not gain the benefit of any profit? I couldn't get a reply from U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly's D.C. or Sharon offices. At least we could get time with Kathy Dahlkemper when she was the representative for the 3rd District.

Tar sands oil must be heated to flow through the pipeline. Heating makes this oil more corrosive than any other oil in the world. There will be leaks. The much shorter Alaskan pipeline has more than 400 leaks a year. How many leaks will XL have per year if it's completed?

And to push this pipeline, Republicans have advocated giving a foreign nation the power of eminent domain. Money talks; democracy walks.

Also, pipelines to New Jersey are being enlarged to carry tar sands oil to refine for export. There is no law to say this oil is needed here and must stay here.

Roland Curry|Sharon

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