

Erie County Taxpayer Newsletter



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From County Executive Chris Collins



Summer is traditionally the busiest time of year for the tourism industry. Here in Erie County, this summer has brought about many necessary changes to our Buffalo Niagara Convention

and Visitor's Bureau.

The CVB Board recently voted to appoint Drew Cerza as the interim President and CEO. As the founder of the National Buffalo Wing Festival, Drew has welcomed hundreds of thousands of people to Buffalo. I am confident his leadership will bring new ideas and a fresh perspective to the CVB.

There have also been recent changes to the CVB Board of Directors. I am very excited that Jonathan Dandes, President of Rich Baseball Operations; Douglas Hartmayer, Director of Public Affairs for the NFTA; and Mary Roberts, Executive Director of the Martin House Restoration Corp., have all joined the board.

With our changes at the CVB, I am hopeful we can build better collaboration among our local cultural organizations to brand our region, better welcome tourists and boost our tourism efforts.

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Erie County Department of Social Services Helping in a Tough Economy

Erie County's Department of Social Services will be participating in two new programs this week. Project Homeless Connect will be held on Friday, July 17, at the Buffalo Convention Center from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. This is the first of what will be an annual event in Buffalo, sponsored by the WNY Coalition for the Homeless. Project Homeless Connect began in San Francisco in 2004, and is now held in over 300 cities.

Approximately 60 service providers are expected to participate, including health care agencies, mental health agencies, employment readiness counselors, substance abuse services, and veteran's services counselors, among many others. Gift cards and personal care packages will be given out and lunch will be served.

"This is a great opportunity for our department to collaborate with our community partners to try to end homelessness and to help individuals break out of the poverty cycle," said Barbara Farr, Erie County's Head Social Welfare Examiner.

In addition to the information being provided to homeless individuals, service providers will have an opportunity to network and form future collaborations that will better serve this vulnerable population.

The Department will also be participating in an outreach program on Saturday, July 18, at the UAW Hall on Aero Drive in Cheektowaga. This program is designed to provide information about potential benefits and services available to recently laid-off UAW employees. The program will be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Representatives from Temporary Assistance/Housing and Emergency Services will be accepting Medicaid and food stamp applications as well as distributing information on guidelines for obtaining temporary assistance and emergency services.

"I am pleased the Department of Social Services has been asked to contribute to the success of these two important programs," said Acting Commissioner, Carol Dankert. "These types of events can help to put an end to homelessness. The community can also help by making donations to food banks and shelters in the form of durable goods and services."

Veterans Traveling Tribute Stops in Erie County

Thousands of Western New Yorkers visited Knox Farm State Park in East Aurora to see the American Veterans Traveling Tribute. The exhibit consists of several memorials to different wars, including an 80-percent replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Deputy Erie County Executive Al Hammonds said, "This memorial gives our community a unique way to come together and honor our veterans for their service and bravery. The sacrifices of those who defend and protect our freedom must never be forgotten. These monuments represent our past *and* our present as our Country remains at war."

"It is humbling to see so many names on this wall, and to know that so many young men and women made the ultimate sacrifice for their country in the Vietnam War," he continued.

The memorials were ushered into Knox Farm State Park by a parade of hundreds of veterans on motorcycles. It was an emotional site for many veterans and families who lost loved ones during the Vietnam War.

The exhibit was here during the last week of June.



Erie County 's Director of Veterans Services Patrick Welch and Deputy County Executive Al Hammonds at the Veterans Traveling Tribute.

U.S. Homeland Security Gives Buffalo Area Award

The Buffalo/Niagara region is one of only two areas in the Nation to be fully funded for its 2009 Homeland Security application. The awards were announced on a Nationwide conference call last month.

Our area was awarded nearly \$6 million in Homeland Security funds to buy equipment and supplies used for responding to disasters and public health emergencies in Cities, Towns and Villages throughout Erie County. The equipment includes communications devices and detection response tools for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear explosive incidents. San Diego was the only other U.S. City to receive full funding.



County Executive Collins welcomes about 600 members of the New York State American Legion Auxiliary as they hold their annual convention at the Hyatt in Buffalo.



The new Green Belts pose with County Executive Collins, Deputy County Executive Al Hammonds, Lean Six Sigma Director Bill Carey, and Harvey Stenger from U.B.

Erie County Graduates Ten New Lean Six Sigma Green Belts

Ten more Erie County employees have earned their “Green Belts” in Lean Six Sigma. These employees spearheaded projects to increase efficiency and eliminate waste in County government. There is now a waiting list of union employees looking to sign up for Lean Six Sigma training in Erie County. Initial Six Sigma projects generated millions of dollars in annual taxpayer savings, far surpassing initial expectations.

Paul Kranz, Lee Nadler, Mary Yoviene, Bridget Corcoran, Shirley Lam, Mindy Shaw, Greg Kammer, Amy Sorrentino, Kelly Wahl and Marlaine Hoffman each completed a project to ultimately save taxpayer dollars. The projects ranged from increasing recycling in the Rath Building to improving collection of delinquent property taxes.

Erie County Hard at Work Improving Area Roads

The Erie County Department of Public Works has been busy sealing more than 40 rural roads around the County. They’ve added a thin layer of crushed stone chips and asphalt emulsion to seal the surface of these roads and protect them from weather. It’s a process called “oil and chipping” and is less expensive than asphalt or concrete for low volume roads.

The sealing was paid for through the County’s road fund at a cost of \$3.2 million.

New Civil Service announcements with the last filing dates up to **August 12, 2009** are now available on the County’s website.

Please see: <http://www.erie.gov/employment/index.asp>

or call the Erie Co. Civil Service Exam Line at 716-858-8729.



Summer Reading in Full Swing at the Library

Summer means play time for kids. The last school bells have rung, and for most kids, that means having no homework for months. But the benefits and pleasures of reading need not stop. Now is the best time to get your kids reading for the pure fun of it, and a visit to any Buffalo & Erie County Public Library is a great way to start.

Local libraries offer a wealth of summer activities and reading materials. A few of this summer’s programs include movie matinees, magic shows, and visits from groups like Nickel City Reptiles. Your librarian can also help you match your child to reading material that excites and engages him or her. More information about summer programs at the library can be found on the Library’s events calendar at www.buffalolib.org

This summer, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library locations are participating in the New York State Summer Program known as Be Creative @ Your Library. In addition to the extensive age-appropriate summer reading lists, there are many resources and activities available for librarians, parents, educators, children and teens at the program’s web site, www.summerreadingnys.org

Last year more than 1.5 million young people participated in the New York State Summer Reading Program.



Erie County purchased several new pieces of equipment to take care of parks in the City of Buffalo. The new equipment was paid for with the recently extended City-County parks agreement.

Be Counted - It's Important !

In February and March 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau will mail or deliver more than 130 million questionnaires to households across the nation. Residents are urged to promptly complete and return the forms by mail. All residents of the United States must be counted. This includes people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens and non-citizens.

The 2010 Census will have one of the shortest questionnaires in history, with only a few simple questions—asking for such information as name, relationship, gender, age and date of birth, race, and whether respondents own or rent their home. Most people will have the short form sent to their home for the head of the household to fill out. This simple, short form takes just a few minutes to complete and return by mail. Only three million households a year will receive the “long-form” or American Community Survey (ACS) – which gathers more accurate social and economic data. Your answers are very important because they represent the answers of many other similar households in our community. Your answers are kept confidential — by law, the Census Bureau cannot share answers that respondents provide with anyone or any other government agency.

- **Census affects funding in our community** - Census data directly affects how more than \$300 billion per year in federal and state funding is allocated to communities for neighborhood improvements, public health, education, transportation and much more. That's more than \$3 trillion over a 10-year period. Spending just a few minutes to fill out your census form will help ensure your community gets its fair share of federal and state funding.
- **Census affects your voice in Congress** - Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the census is used to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and to redistrict state legislatures.
- **Census affects your representation in state and local government** - Used to define legislative districts, school district assignment areas and other important functional areas of government.
- **Census informs our community's decisions** - Acts like a snapshot that helps define who we are as a nation. Data about changes in our community are crucial to many planning decisions, such as where to provide services for the elderly, where to build new roads and schools, or where to locate job training centers.

Youth Read Down Their Fines at the Library This Summer

The Buffalo and Erie County Public Library is sponsoring a *Read Down Your Fines* program for children age 16 and under, now through Saturday, September 5th.



Participants may visit any Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, select reading material and read in a designated reading area. Participants earn one *READING BUCK* for every 15 minutes of

reading. Teens (ages 13 to 16) who read to a child can earn two *READING BUCKS* for every 15 minutes of reading. A child who listens to reading earns one *READING BUCK* for every 15 minutes.

Some restrictions apply. For further information, visit the Library's website at www.buffalolib.org.



County Executive Collins presents a proclamation at Biel's Information Technology Systems, during an open house celebration of the company's 70th anniversary.

Emery Park Spruced up with Help from Friends

On June 13, Friends of Emery volunteers held a weeding and planting day at Emery Park. The group worked all day weeding, mulching and planting. An estate donated more than 600 impatiens plants to use at the park.

Emery Park Crew Chief Dan Lewalski, park staff and the sheriff's work crew helped plant all of the donated flowers at the ski lodge and park entrance-way flower boxes. The park looks spectacular thanks to Dan, his staff, and Friends of Emery.

Senior Week at "Body Worlds" Exhibit at Museum of Science

Erie County's Department of Senior Services invites you to check out Senior Week at the "Body Worlds" exhibit at the Buffalo Museum of Science, from July 20-26. The week is going to feature special lectures and activities for our area's older adults.

Through life-like and dramatic poses of full-body specimens and detailed presentation of organs and body parts, guests gain profound insights into the structure and function of healthy and unhealthy bodies. "Body Worlds" specimens, both organs and whole bodies, have undergone plastination—Dr. Gunther Von Hagens' groundbreaking method of halting decomposition and preserving the body after death for medical study, invented in 1977.

Erie County's Commissioner of Senior Services Brenda Ward explains, "Because Senior Services recognizes the importance of healthy lifestyles and independent choices, as well as education about your own health, the Department encourages you to explore this unique exhibit."

July 24, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Senior Services will be issuing their Complimentary Card for reduced fare on the Metro Rail, along with other vendor discounts. Also on July 24, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., they will host a health lecture called "Powering Your Memory" about Alzheimer's and Dementia. Throughout the week, Wegmans pharmacists will be consulting with seniors about medications they're taking.

Much more information about this incredible exhibit is available at <http://www.sciencebuff.org>. A \$2 discount off regular adult or senior admission to "Body Worlds" is available on the Senior Services' website at www.erie.gov/depts/seniorservices.



Elder Law Day

About 400 people showed up for Elder Law Day June 11, at the Hearthstone Manor in Depew. Erie County's Department of Senior Services was a sponsor of the event. Participants learned about a variety of legal, financial and long term care matters.

Coming next issue:

- **Therapeutic Horse Riding Program for Veterans**
- **Classes Offered for People Helping Elderly Relatives**
- **Fixing Toboggan Runs at Chestnut Ridge**



County Executive Collins helps cut the ribbon to open a new playground at the Monarch Little Learners Academy in Lackawanna.