

# Erie County Taxpayer Newsletter



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## From County Executive Chris Collins



As we head into a summer of high gas prices, many Western New Yorkers are choosing to stay in the area for a vacation rather than travel.

Erie County offers a host of cultural and historical attractions that are waiting to be experienced. Erie County funding is critical to the support and promotion of these cultural attractions. This is why I've chosen to highlight the newest members of the Erie County Cultural Resources Advisory Board in this issue. Their important role in Erie County will have a lasting effect on all of our residents.

I urge you to get out and explore Erie County this summer. Hopefully you'll experience why I love to call Erie County home.

## Contact the County Executive

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## Educating Area Service Members

The Erie County Office of Veterans Services has introduced a new program that strives to give service members a reason to return to the area. Trocaire College, Bryant and Stratton College, and ITT Technical Institute have all agreed to provide education free of charge to military personnel returning home from the war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan. These three schools have offered to cover any remaining tuition costs that the Federal GI Bill and New York State's Veteran's Tuition Award do not cover.

Veterans Services Director Patrick Welch originally approached Trocaire College with this unique idea, which then spread to Bryant and Stratton and ITT Tech. The idea was to start with the area's smaller colleges to perfect the program and gauge interest. Director Welch is currently looking forward to increasing participation from all local colleges and universities.

## Parks Introduces New Summer Hours

The Erie County Parks Department is pleased to announce the re-opening of Wendt and Bennett beaches this summer. Due to budget constraints last year both beaches were only open on the weekends. This summer they will be open seven days a week, with lifeguards on duty every day from 11am to 8pm. Opening day will be Saturday, June 28.

The Parks Department has also opened the Gazebo at Isleview Park for rentals this summer in addition to the rental facilities available at Akron Park, Chestnut Ridge Park, Como Lake Park, Ellicott Creek Park, Elma Meadows, and Emery Park. These parks have shelters as well as indoor facilities which are available to rent year round.

As a reminder, Elma Meadows Golf Course and Grover Cleveland Golf Course have been open for business since early May.

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## Six Sigma Update

Six Sigma Director Al Hammonds has created a link on the County's website to a new Six Sigma page. Taxpayers will be able to find information related to Six Sigma on the site, which can be accessed directly from [www.erie.gov](http://www.erie.gov) or at [www.erie.gov/sixsigma](http://www.erie.gov/sixsigma).

The website, which among other things contains Six Sigma links and an overview of the Six Sigma program in Erie County. It also provides up-to-date lists of all ongoing Six Sigma projects. Hammonds is hopeful that the website will communicate the County's Six Sigma goal of reducing waste, minimizing paperwork, and improving efficiency.

## Parks Continued...

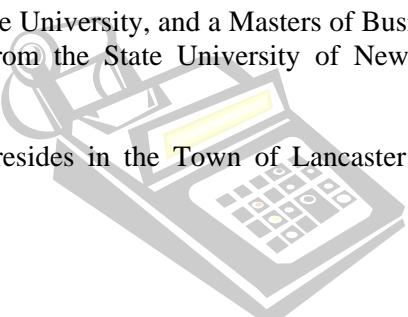
Tee Time Reservation cards can be purchased for \$30.00 and allow the card holder the ability to reserve a tee time up to eight days in advance. The card can be purchased at either golf course. Elma Meadows also has a new driving range which is open for business. Balls can be purchased for \$4.00 a bucket. For more information and available tee times please call (716) 652-5475 for Elma Meadows information and (716) 836-7398 for Grover Cleveland information.

## Changes in the Office of Budget & Management

Gregory G. Gach has been selected by County Executive Collins to replace the departing Budget & Management Director, Beth Kornbrekke. Gach comes to the Office of Budget and Management from the office of the Erie County Comptroller, where he has worked as Deputy Comptroller since 2006.

Previously, Gach held many financially related positions, including Director of Grant Accounting Services in the Comptroller's Office, Controller at Erie Community College and Senior Budget Consultant with the Erie County Legislature and the Erie County Budget Office. Gach received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Marquette University, and a Masters of Business Administration from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

He currently resides in the Town of Lancaster with his wife, Helen.



## Additions to the Erie County Cultural Resource Advisory Board

Erie County Executive Chris Collins has announced the appointment of 13 new members and the re-appointment of 9 members to the Erie County Cultural Resource Advisory Board (ECCRAB). The appointees come from various areas of Erie County with diverse backgrounds. The main responsibility of ECCRAB is to perform an annual review of the cultural organizations which receive funding from the County, and make recommendations to the County Executive on which organizations should receive funding in the next county budget. The 2009 ECCRAB Members are:

Barbara Baker	Scott Behrend
Robert Budin	Leslie Celmer
Susan Chevli	Elizabeth Clune
Nancy Davis	Joseph Dispenza
Carol Halter	Steven Joseph
Mary Ann Kresse	Anne Leary
Faye Levy	Mary M. Martino
Francesca Mesiah	James Pappas
Hal Payne	JoAnne Schwartz
Stephen Studley	Raymond Walter
Cindy Zachow	Arnold Zelman

## Women, Infants and Children Program to be Showcased

Erie County Department of Health's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program has been recognized as one of the most innovative programs in New York State and will be showcased at the WIC Breastfeeding regional conferences in Albany in June and New York City in July.

Sue Leisner, RD, IBCLC, WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator, has been invited to showcase Erie County's very successful collaboration with Sisters Hospital's lactation department, as well as a unique tiered approach to training and hiring peer counselors within the WIC clientele base.



The WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program has been an integral part of WIC services in Erie County since 1995, increasing initial breastfeeding rates of 12% in 1995 to 42% in 2008. The ECDOH WIC program currently has 10 counselors and 5 interns supporting an average caseload of 2,000 breastfeeding moms and babies.

## Providing Work Experience to Low Income Individuals

The Erie County Department of Social Services offers individuals who participate in the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) program the option of participating in the TANF Achieve Program (TAP) as well. Those who participate in TAP are chosen because their Case Workers believe they are ready for work experience. Recent changes to the program have made participation easier, and individuals have become invested in their own communities.



Put in place over two years ago, TAP began with 25% client participation and has now grown to over 42% participation. This places Erie County as the leader of participants among the seven largest districts in New York State.

Work-ready TANF clients who are referred to the program first complete a three-week “job club” to help them prepare for and find a job. The DSS Employment Counselor and the client then work together to develop a plan that includes 35 hours/week of work experience. The County also offers an employment program that allows employees to work 20 hours/week and the remaining hours are spent on educational activities or vocational training, rather than a full 35 hours devoted to employment. The expectation is that clients will be assigned to a work experience placement within a month of their initial program application.

Work placements are provided in neighborhood locations, known as hub sites. These hub sites are community centers or large nonprofit organizations that provide a variety of social service programs to neighborhood residents. The TAP participants are then assigned to a hub site near their

own home, which has three notable benefits to both DSS and the work experience participants. First, it reduces the clients need for transportation as they are typically only a walk or short bus ride away from their work site. Second, clients are able to access other services available at the hub site such as child-care, preschool and after-school programs, mentoring programs and mental health counseling. Third, the use of neighborhood hub sites increases TAP recipients’ investment in and around the community. They remain connected to where they live because it is also where they work.

TAP participants who show up to work consistently and perform well in their work-experience placement, are offered the opportunity to participate in the Pivot Program. In this program, recipients are selected by a private-sector employer under the agreement that the County will pay the participants wages for six months in exchange for training as long as the employer commits to hiring them permanently afterward. Employers are able to use Pivot as a way to screen and train potential entry-level workers. For TAP recipients, Pivot creates opportunities to successfully transition into competitive employment. At any given point in time, approximately 400 TAP clients are placed in Pivot sites. Seventy-five percent of Pivot clients successfully transition from their Pivot site into a permanent job.



## New Tools for Dental Identification

The Erie County Medical Examiner’s Office now has the ability to provide dental identification on deceased “Jane and John Does” that arrive at the Medical Examiner’s Office. The dental identification process is performed in house without any additional cost to the County by the Chief Medical Examiner, James Woytash, MD, DDS, and Ray Miller DDS, an odontology fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

Dental identification requires less time and expense than collecting DNA evidence. The time that a family is waiting for positive identification can often seem endless, and anything that can be done to reduce this wait time is extremely important.

## Coming Next Month...

- **2nd Mayor’s and Supervisor’s Meeting held**
- **Mentholatum gives back at Chestnut Ridge Park**
- **News from Public Works**