

# Erie County Taxpayer Newsletter



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## From County Executive Chris Collins



Everywhere I look, I see continuous improvements to the services that Erie County provides to its residents. The Probation Department has designed a new program to keep drivers safe, while the Health Department has updated its TB Clinic's capabilities.

I promised the taxpayers a more responsive government when I was elected in November. This month's newsletter provides perfect examples of how we are striving to improve every Erie County resident's quality of life.

I encourage you to look into all of the programs that are offered by Erie County. Some new programs come from the Veterans Services Department and the Department of Senior Services, which are highlighted in this month's issue.

## Contact the County Executive

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## New DISS Director

Navpreet Jatana is one of the new members of the Collins Administration. The County Executive has appointed Jatana as the Director of the Department of Information and Support Services. Jatana comes to the County from MBMS, Inc. in Amherst where he has experience with enhancing customer relations through the use of technology to continuously improve business processes.

Eager to learn and apply new concepts and skills, Jatana hopes to create a dynamic new website for the county that will incorporate the open government promises of the Collins Administration. He would also like to see DISS become more aligned with the technological industry.

An Amherst resident, Jatana graduated from the State University of New York, at Buffalo with a degree in Applied Computing and Information Technology.

## Six Sigma Update

Al Hammonds began his work as Erie County's Six Sigma Director with a list of benchmarks to be accomplished each quarter. All of the five benchmarks for the first quarter have been met, including the creation of an Executive Six Sigma Steering Committee, identification of Green Belt trainees, and Six Sigma Overview Training for Commissioners and Department Heads. Another benchmark was the establishment of an external Six Sigma Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee includes representatives from industry, academia, and consultants. The goal of the committee is to advise and make recommendations on the overall high level of strategy and share their vision from an "outside of government" perspective.

## News from the County Clerk

Erie County Clerk Kathy Hochul wishes to remind taxpayers that they can help keep funds in Erie County by dropping off their Vehicle Registration Renewals in the Drop Boxes located in the Lobby of the Rath Building and at all Auto Bureau locations. "With the help of County residents, we can keep more than \$1.2 million that Erie County is needlessly losing to Albany when drivers renew their automobile registrations online or mail the renewal to Albany," said Hochul.

For those who don't live or work downtown, the Erie County Clerk's Website ([www.erie.gov/clerk](http://www.erie.gov/clerk)) contains a "Just Mail It" tab where after providing your information, a green envelope with postage paid will be sent to them. They can then send their renewal form and check back to the Erie County Clerk's Office. For specific Auto Bureau questions, please call the Customer Call Center at 858-7450.

## Collins Announces Convention and Visitors Board Appointments



County Executive Chris Collins has appointed five new members to the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors. They are:

- Drew Cerza – Founder, National Buffalo Wing Festival
- Florine Luhr – Executive Director, Advancing Arts and Culture
- Jim Sandoro – Founder and Executive Director, Buffalo Transportation Museum/Pierce-Arrow Museum
- Mark Stadler – Chief Executive Officer and Owner, BAV Services
- Robert Victoria – Senior Vice President of Marketing, Seneca Gaming Corporation

Drew Cerza founded the National Buffalo Wing Festival six years ago and has since welcomed over 325,000 people to Buffalo for the summer event. Known as the ‘Wing King’, Cerza has appeared on NBC’s Today Show, the Food Network, CNN and The Travel Channel.

Florine Luhr is Executive Director for Advancing Arts and Culture Buffalo Niagara (AAC), whose mission is to develop, strengthen, and promote the Buffalo Niagara region as a place to live and visit world-class arts, cultural and heritage attractions. She previously served as Project Director for the Erie Canal Harbor Project at Empire State Development Corporation.

Jim Sandoro is Founder and Executive Director of the Buffalo Transportation Museum/Pierce-Arrow Museum in Buffalo. He also serves on the New York State Scenic Byways Advisory Board and is the owner of Buffalo Motor Car and Sandoro Collector Car Auctions.

Mark Stadler is the CEO and Owner of BAV Services, a nationally acclaimed audio visual rental and staging company. In addition to his 20 years of operating BAV Services, Stadler is active in the Western New York Community, and has served as the former President of the Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives.

Robert Victoria is the Senior Vice President of Marketing for the Seneca Gaming Corporation and all of its subsidiaries. Prior to joining the Seneca Gaming Corporation in April 2006, Victoria was the Regional Vice President of Casino marketing for Harrah’s Entertainment in Memphis, TN.

As Commissioner of the Department of Environment and Planning, Holly Sinnott is also a member of the Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors. Commissioner Sinnott is working closely with County Executive Collins to ensure that our local arts and cultural organizations are a vibrant part of the economy.

## County Executive Encourages Residents to Sign Up for NY-ALERT

Erie County has adopted NY-ALERT, New York State’s all-hazards alert and notification system. This web-based system will be used to provide emergency information to county residents. County Executive Collins and Emergency Services Commissioner Greg Skibitsky are encouraging all residents to sign up for this free service.

NY-ALERT is a web-based portal that offers one-stop access through which State agencies, county and local governments, and emergency service agencies can provide emergency information to a defined local, regional or statewide audience.

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## New TB Treatment Regimen

The Erie County Department of Health Tuberculosis (TB) Clinic has implemented a new cutting edge treatment regimen to prevent TB infection from becoming TB disease. The old treatment program involved taking a drug which took nine months to help prevent TB infection from becoming TB disease. The new treatment now only takes four months of use and has a greater completion rate, preventing more cases of TB disease in the future.

To sign up for this free service, visit the NY-ALERT website at [www.nyalert.gov](http://www.nyalert.gov). The entire subscription process takes only a few minutes once online. Residents who do not have access to a computer can call 1-888-697-6972 toll free. When subscribing, residents can choose the type of emergency information they wish to receive, as well as the method of dissemination (email, telephone call at home or work, cell phone call, text message, fax or pager).

## Veterans Services Introduces New Program

The mission of the Department of Veterans Services is twofold. The first goal is to ensure that every veteran in the county is registered in the VA System and is fully aware of the benefits they have earned. The second is to make veterans an economic force in education, employment and business development. To accomplish these goals, Director Patrick Welch has designed the Four Pillars of Empowerment.

The Four Pillars of Empowerment program was created to assist the approximately 100,000 veterans living in Erie County. The four pillars are Government and Services, Local Business Community, Not-for-Profits, and Education (GI Bill). Under the Government Services Pillar, ECDVS would like to bring together all government agencies to ensure that local vets are receiving all of the benefits which they are entitled to. The Local Business Community Pillar involves job placement for veterans within the Western New York area. The third Pillar involves support from Not-for-Profit agencies providing needed services without it affecting the service members' career goals. The final Pillar involves the GI Bill and the ability of local higher education institutions to provide tuition free education to returning veterans.

## Probation Department Adds Home Visit Program

The Erie County Probation Department operates a Felony DWI Unit that supervises the Felony DWI population. The department's new initiative, with funding from STOP-DWI, allows probation officers in this unit to make unannounced home visits on weekends, after business hours and on holidays. This contact reinforces compliance with court ordered sanctions, and conditions this group to expect oversight at any time, altering the behaviors that lead to DWI.

Each year over 500 Felony DWI Offenders are placed on Probation for DWI Offenses. This population represents a real threat to the safety of Erie County residents. Statistically they are responsible for more DWI fatalities than other drunken drivers and certainly typical drivers. Their sentences often contain conditions such as no alcohol use and no driving while they serve their state mandated license sanction.

### Coming Next Month...

- *New Members to the Cultural Advisory Board*
- *News from the Department of Social Services*
- *Honoring & Educating our Veterans*
- *News from the Budget Department*

## Caregiver Classes Offered

The Department of Senior Services wants to help people become better care givers. The Department has received a grant to do just that, by training leaders for its family caregiver classes. The Community Health Foundation has awarded the grant to benefit the minority communities within Erie County. Expected to begin late in the summer, leaders will be trained to conduct the Powerful Tools for Caregivers classes.

The Powerful Tools for Caregivers classes are a series of classes offered by Senior Services to help reduce stress, better communicate, and locate helpful resources that can assist caregivers with the care of a loved one. The vast majority of care provided to older adults is provided by a network of family and friends, yet caring for someone with a chronic illness can be stressful and challenging. It is important that caregivers have the tools and knowledge to ensure that they are taking care of both their loved ones and themselves.

Classes are scheduled at various locations within Erie County, run for six sessions and cost \$25 (covered by some insurances). Please call 858-2177 for more information or to register.

