

OPINION & COMMUNITY

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Commentary



MIKE MYER

Living In Fear On Our Knees?

After his newspaper's office was firebombed in 2011, probably by Islamic terrorists, Stepane Charbonnier said he would change nothing. The paper, Charlie Hebdo, would continue to publish articles and cartoons critical of politicians of all stripes — and annoying to the faithful of all religions.

"I'd rather die standing than live on my knees," Charbonnier explained.

Last week he died as he said, when Islamic terrorists invaded Charlie Hebdo's offices and massaced Charbonnier and 11 other people.

Both the past and the immediate aftermath of the slaughter raise a question for all of us: In proclaiming "Je suis Charlie" — I am Charlie — many of us, especially in the news media, are proclaiming support for a free press and unfettered exchange of ideas, no matter how offensive they are to some people.

But are we really like Charbonnier? Or have we decided, especially regarding Islamic terrorists, that it's better to get down on our knees occasionally, in fear of what might happen if we stand too tall?

Most of us will never face the peril Charbonnier did. The occasion will never present itself for us to do anything that might anger someone to the point of killing us over something as trivial as a newspaper cartoon. Here in America, we still believe in calling to complain when a newspaper runs a cartoon we consider offensive — and dropping it at that.

Collectively, through many of our elected leaders and many in our mass media, we have different attitudes about angering people. It's all right to run offensive cartoons concerning the Pope. It's expected satire will be focused on the president.

But we make an exception for Muslims. President Barack Obama himself has questioned whether it's all right to offend them.

Why is that? If we're so concerned about other people's feelings, why do we not condemn behavior that upsets Christians or Jews?

Could it be because we know they won't come after us with AK-47s and bombs?

So that's the question we ought to be asking ourselves: Have we decided that we'll insist on standing up to people who won't hurt us — while bowing down to those who may?

Are we, in short, lying to the world and ourselves when we proclaim "Je suis Charlie"?

Myer can be reached at: mmyer@theintelligencer.net.

HELP WANTED

Volunteer Ken McCloskey works in the soup kitchen.

Volunteer Maurice Walker of Wheeling helps in the cleanup at the Soup Kitchen of Greater Wheeling after lunch time.

Photos by Joselyn King

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR LOCAL CHARITIES

By JOSELYN KING
Staff Writer

WHEELING — After the Christmas lights and feeling of seasonal giving are put away following the holidays, January and February are long cold months when the warmth of volunteering is needed the most.

Becky Rodocker, executive director of the Soup Kitchen of Greater Wheeling, said she gets many calls during November and December from those wanting to volunteer during the Christmas holidays. There were 300 requests alone this year from those wanting to volunteer on Christmas Day, and she asked the potential volunteers at their call back during January and February. Some do, but most don't, according to Rodocker.

"In December, we had so many calls from people wanting to volunteers, and those bringing in shoes, clothes and toys," she said. "We were inundated, and our patrons were as well. No matter where they went — whatever social service agency — they were given amenities."

"Then comes January, and it's a cold, hard month."

It's also a time when the number of volunteers and donations sharply decreases, and the number of those patronizing the soup kitchen increases. Rodocker said the soup kitchen usually serves 250 to 300 meals a day.

Most of the patrons who attend are people who do have families and jobs, but whose paychecks don't extend to the end of the month, Rodocker said. In January, often they also are beset with additional bills.

In addition to providing breakfast and lunch, the Soup Kitchen hosts a family dinner from 4-6 p.m. each Wednesday night throughout the year sponsored by Wheeling Elks Lodge 28. These are especially important to the community during the winter months, and volunteers are always needed on the first and fourth Wednesdays of the month and when there is a fifth Wednesday, Rodocker said.

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Volunteer Robert Schweizer of Wheeling helps clean up.

Wheeling Man Donates Eddie Martin Photos to Diocese

O'Leary Asks Archives To Preserve Collection

By SHELLEY HANSON
Staff Writer

WHEELING — Looking at Wheeling resident Eddie Martin's photographs brings back a lot of memories for city resident Bill O'Leary.

Especially a photo Martin took of his father, Verne O'Leary, in North Wheeling during a World War II scrap metal drive in 1942. That photo, along with hundreds of others, are part of a collection that O'Leary recently donated to the Catholic Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Archives.

O'Leary was given the collection by Martin's sister, Gertrude, who passed away recently.

"I grew up in North Wheeling with them," O'Leary said of Martin and his sister.

Martin died in 1988. O'Leary said he and his late wife, Sharon, helped take care of Gertrude Martin before she passed away. They helped her move into the Brookpark Place Apartments. She just happened to move into the same unit that O'Leary's



In this Eddie Martin photograph, a group of men pose in North Wheeling during a scrap metal drive in 1942. Wheeling resident Bill O'Leary's father, Verne, is shown with the group, fifth from left.

Photo by Eddie Martin

mother lived in before she passed away, he added.

"I inherited all the pictures he had," O'Leary said, noting he made copies of sev-

eral photos for himself. Others he mailed to people he could identify.

While going through the photos, O'Leary's wife was able to pick out his

I decided they could use them because they have archives. They were thrilled to death."

— Bill O'Leary

father in one.

"We were looking at these pictures and Sharon said, 'I think that's your dad,'" he said. "It was in North Wheeling during a scrap drive during the war."

The photos and a story about Martin are being featured in the Winter 2014 edition of Goldenseal — a magazine published quarterly by the state of West Virginia. In addition to the photos, O'Leary gave the Diocese many papers that were in Gertrude's possession after her stint as the Sacred Heart Catholic Church's secretary in North Wheeling. "I decided they could use them because they have archives. They were thrilled to death," O'Leary said of officials with the Diocese.

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Commentary



MIKE MYER

Get Kids Away From Addicts

Dominic Dickinson, of Columbus, died of a drug overdose on May 13. He was 11 months old.

Baby Dominic somehow ingested heroin and fentanyl, a much-abused painkiller, his parents had obtained. They have been charged with involuntary manslaughter and child endangering.

Exactly two weeks later, another Columbus child, this one a 14-month-old girl, died after ingesting the same deadly mixture of drugs. Her mother also has been charged.

An urban horror? No. This month a 6-month-old baby had to be rushed to the hospital from her home in Cadiz. She had a toxic level of opiates in her system. Her parents have been charged with assorted crimes.

It is happening more and more. Children are dying and suffering permanent injury by accidentally ingesting mom and dad's illegal drugs. In what thankfully are very, very rare cases, adults are giving them the stuff.

Add to that outrage the number of pregnant women who, fully aware of the damage they are doing to their unborn children, continue to abuse drugs. That includes alcohol, by the way.

Spare me all the excuses about men and women who are addicted to certain drugs and allegedly can't stop themselves from placing their children, born and unborn, in great peril. They're unacceptable.

Ever hear of drug addiction treatment clinics? So have the adults who choose not to use them in attempts to free themselves from addiction — and safeguard their children.

Addiction may not be a choice. Refusing to get help for it is a choice.

Adults who allow their drug habits to endanger pregnant children ought to be punished severely. Much more important, more needs to be done to get children out of their hands before the little ones suffer harm.

Pregnant addicts ought to be given a choice: Get addiction treatment immediately, or go to a jail with special facilities to take care of them and their unborn babies.

Anyone arrested for any sort of drug offense ought to have his or her children removed from the home and placed in carefully monitored custody by relatives or, if necessary, the state.

Go ahead. Tell me I'm being unreasonably harsh. Tell me it's not really the parents' fault.

While you're at it, explain that to Dominic Dickinson.

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Photo Provided

Singer-songwriter Tom Breiding, a native of Wheeling, performs for United Mine Workers of America members at a coal rally.

Wheeling Musician Carries Flag for the Coal Industry



Photo by Drew Parker

Wheeling-born folk artist Tom Breiding, right, prepares music with friend and fellow musician Eric Stadler for a CD release and video premier of his new album, "River, Rails or Road."

Breiding Sings Songs Of the Working Man

By DREW PARKER
Staff Writer

WHEELING — Local musician Tom Breiding remembers the Ohio Valley as a once booming area swallowed by the decline of industry.

Born in East Wheeling, Breiding's childhood saw a downtown full of department stores and countless service shops, crushed by the death of local factories, steel mills and coal mines.

Now, he is looking to be a voice for West Virginia's story and coal culture.

After a stint in Nashville after his departure from Wheeling in early adulthood, he moved to the South Hills of Pittsburgh and began singing and playing music throughout the region.

Breiding has been employed at Wheeling Jesuit University for the past three years, where he works for the Appalachian Institute, leading him into service work in several of West Virginia's coal towns. After meeting members of the United Mine Workers of America during his travels, Breiding decided to be a voice of local laborers. After attending a UMWA rally in 2012, he began traveling with the group, sharing musical interpretations of their community struggle along the way.

A Mountain State troubador of sorts, Breiding's folk melodies tell the tale of the blue collar workers and their families from various points in West Virginia history.

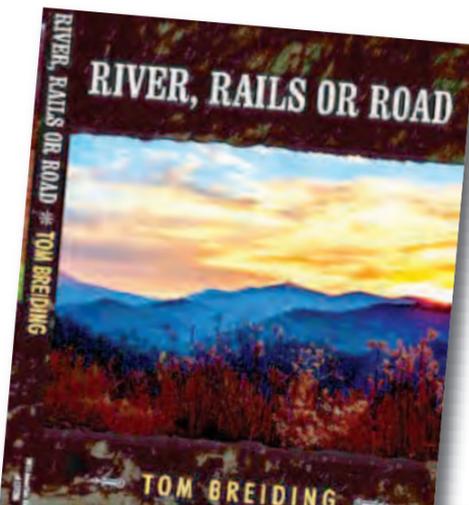
"West Virginia is coal. It always has been," he said. "My cause right now is mostly devoted to the retirees whose health care, Medicare and pensions are all in jeopardy in the fallout of the bankruptcies and buyouts we're seeing with the decline of coal."

Breiding will bring his most recent album, "River, Rails or Road," to Wheeling's Blue Church for an album release. The album features a 17-minute documentary DVD, "River, Rails or Road: Tom Breiding's Wheeling," by Jeff Sewald. The film chronicles Breiding's childhood and memories of Wheeling, and how those experiences impacted his songwriting.

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LAUNCH EVENT SET

■ A film premiere and release show for "River, Rails or Road," by Tom Breiding and American Son is set for 7:30 p.m. Friday at The Blue Church, 1206 Byron St., Wheeling.



Bikes Offer Stealthy Approach to Wheeling Police Work



Photo by Fred Connors

Pfc. Robert McConnell on the three-wheel CanAm, Cpl. Josh Sanders on a bicycle and Sgt. Rick Roxby with a motorcycle, patrol the streets of Wheeling when special vehicles are needed.

Vehicles Keep Things Moving During Special Events

By FRED CONNORS
Senior Staff Writer

WHEELING — Visitors coming to Wheeling for festivals or parades are often greeted by police officers on two and three-wheeled vehicles zipping through the streets, keeping things moving.

Cpl. Josh Sanders, the city's only full-time traffic officer, depends upon police-equipped bicycles, motorcycles and a three-wheel CanAm, also called a Spider, to take him and other officers places traditional cruisers cannot go. They all have flashing lights and sirens.

"We use the bicycles and motorcycles for most festival and race patrols," he said. "The Spider comes in handy during grant-funded patrols such as those targeting seat-belt or speeding violations."

Several Wheeling police officers are certified for bike patrol but most are only used for special assignments.

In order to be certified, officers must undergo 40 hours of intensive training especially designed for bike patrol through the International Police Mountain Bike Association.

The bikes are a very beneficial tool for community policing.

— Wheeling police Cpl. Josh Sanders

The training combines emergency vehicle operations for bikes officers with patrol procedures, tactics, night operations, scenarios and basic bike maintenance and on-the-road repairs. Off-road riding and bike-specific exercises may be added at the instructor's discretion.

"Among other things, we learn how to ride up and down steps if necessary," Sanders said. "We are trained in falling techniques, safety and maneuvering through crowds and tight spaces."

The training includes basic bike handling through tight cone courses, balance and control techniques.

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MIKE MYER

Keeping Roy Where He Belongs

No child should have to ride a bus for two hours a day to go to school. But for a special needs youngster with both intellectual and physical challenges, that's just plain *wrong*.

Perhaps you've read about Roy Stevens. He's an 11th grade special needs student in the Hundred area.

Last year, Stevens attended Hundred High School, where he did well. HHS football player Richard Yocum said his classmate "was learning sign language. He played an instrument in the band. He just grew. It seems like he wants to be here."

But he did not want to be at Magnolia High School, where he attended the previous year. According to a Wetzel County school system official, Stevens had "issues" that year. He did not want to get up and go to school every day.

No wonder. Ever driven W.Va. 7 between Hundred and New Martinsville, where Magnolia is located? Allow 45 minutes in a car. In a school bus, an hour, at least. And in Stevens' case, because of his condition, he has to be restrained while on the bus.

Now, Wetzel County school officials want to send Stevens back to Magnolia. His parents have protested. So have many of his neighbors. HHS football players and many other students joined in.

Wetzel County Board of Education policy is that severely affected special needs students from throughout the county are to attend Magnolia. It's easy to understand why. Like most school systems, Wetzel County has to be careful about spending money. Far fewer personnel have to be paid to handle the special needs kids that way.

So don't be too hard on the school officials. They're trying. Really.

Stevens' parents want him to stay at HHS. They know he'll miss some school if forced to go to Magnolia. That could put them in hot water because of truancy laws.

More flexibility might help. Why couldn't Stevens go to high school in Mannington (18 miles from Hundred, compared to 32 for New Martinsville)? Partly because that's a different school system.

Or why couldn't he just stay at HHS, where, according to one student's sign, "Roy Brings Joy"?

Rules are rules. Financial realities are real.

But the reality facing Stevens and his parents is just plain *wrong*.

Have we all become so rigid in our thinking that we can't find *some* way to help the boy?

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Little Ones Get in the Swing of School

By JOSELYN KING
Staff Writer

WEST LIBERTY — The 4-year-old sat on a swing on the West Liberty Elementary playground with a desire to move forward and fly high.

"Can somebody help me?" his small voice called out to his fellow pre-kindergarten classmates and the teachers who were present.

Ohio County Student Services Director Mary Lu Hutchins — a former West Virginia teacher of the year — stepped forward, introduced herself, and asked the young boy what he needed. He wanted a push, and she lightly guided him on the swing.

The boy is among the nine students that make up the first pre-kindergarten class at West Liberty Elementary.

Now pre-kindergarten classes are available to all 4-year-olds in Ohio County, as well as eligible 3-year-olds. The new pre-kindergarten class has spots for up to 20 students.

The young students can attend school each day from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Class begins with students being served breakfast, and teacher Jenny Klein said youngsters not wishing to eat have play time.

Then they hold a class meeting to discuss just what they want to do that day. Klein reads them stories, and maybe they play with items found in the pretend kitchen. They learn all about what foods are good for them to eat.

Then it's time to go play outside, or if the weather is bad students go to the gym, Klein said. There's lunch, then mandatory quiet time and many of the students take a short nap. Some may go home then, while others stay for craft time, to make words with blocks or read from books in the classroom library.

"The programs are successful, and the children enjoy the enrichment provided to them," Hutchins said. "Everything is based on building vocabulary because children use words to think."

The goal of pre-kindergarten is to help children become acclimated to learning process, she said. Reading is stressed, as is teaching students new words.

The school district also is working with Carnegie Mellon's "Create Lab" to bring the teaching of scientific thought to pre-kindergarten classrooms. The students are presented with an everyday object — such as a box — and asked if they can think of other uses for it. When they think "outside the box," students see the box as a stool or portable basket, according to Hutchins.

West Virginia ranks fifth across the nation in the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in pre-school, according to data compiled by the National Institute for Early Education Research.

The numbers show 69.2 percent of 4-year-olds in the state are attending pre-school, and



Top photo, West Liberty Elementary School students Zachary Minch, left, Ford Turkaly and Gracie Bukovac enjoy outdoor playtime as part of their school day. Above, Jennifer Klein, teacher of the pre-kindergarten class at West Liberty Elementary School, reads to students during library time.

Photos by Joselyn King

11.3 percent of 3-year-olds. There are 16,455 children enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs throughout the state.

Only the District of Columbia, Vermont, Florida and Oklahoma have more young toddlers in their classrooms.

In 2002, the West Virginia Legislature passed legislation requiring the state to expand access to pre-school education and make pre-kindergarten opportunities available to all 4-year-olds in the state by the 2012-2013 school year.

West Virginia's preschool program, called West Virginia Universal Pre-K, is available in all 55 counties.

And West Virginia law requires that a minimum of half of the pre-kindergarten programs in a school district operate in collaboration with a private provider in order to facilitate expansion of the program.

In Ohio County, there are nine pre-kindergarten programs, and all are affiliated with child care centers or Head Start programs. These organizations partner with Ohio County Schools to provide pre-kindergarten classes.

Employees with the school district and the part-

ner organization work together in the classrooms with students.

The new West Liberty Elementary pre-kindergarten class — and a similar program at the Warwood School — are operated by Creative Hands.

The Crittenton Services Cradles to Crayons group oversees pre-kindergarten classes at Bethlehem and Middle Creek elementaries,

while Northern Panhandle Head Start has the programs at Madison and Ritchie elementaries. Easter Seals operates the pre-kindergarten class at Steenrod Elementary, and the Holy Family Child Care and Development Center provides classes at Woodsdale Elementary School.

Students can start pre-kindergarten classes at any time in Ohio County, and parents wanting to enroll their students in pre-kindergarten classes should contact Hutchins at 304-243-0337.

While there is a pre-kindergarten program at all Ohio County elementary schools, students aren't required to attend the one closest to their home if their parents wish to place them at another location.

The numbers show 69.2 percent of 4-year-olds in the state are attending pre-school, and 11.3 percent of 3-year-olds. There are 16,455 children enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs throughout the state.

Ohio EPA Says There Are About 30 Species of Fish in McMahan Creek

By CASEY JUNKINS
Staff Writer

NEFFS — Those looking to see a few dozen types of fish need not go to an aquarium. They need only to go to McMahan Creek between Bellaire and Warnock.

Recently, officials with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency sampled the creek near the submarine bridge that carries Boyd Ridge Road across the stream from Ohio 149. Field biologist Chuck Boucher said he and his interns pulled about 30 types of fish — including freshwater drum, rock bass and northern hogsuckers — from the creek in about a 150-yard stretch.

"Everybody will be running down here to fish now," Richland Township Trustee Greg Bizzarri said. "I didn't think there would be that many kinds of fish in here."

Boucher said he last took samples from the creek in 2009. Since then, he said the water quality has not seemed to change much.

"People think the government is non-responsive. In fact, we are very responsive," Boucher said.

During the tour, officials with the Belmont County Soil and Water Conservation District, Kathy Baugh and Liza Butler, said they were impressed with the water quality.

"It is good to see so much diversity of fish here," Butler said.

Ohio Rep. Jack Cera, D-Bellaire, asked if officials could return in a shorter interval next time, as he believes activity associated with the Marcellus and Utica shale industry could impact the creek. Boucher said



Chuck Boucher, field biologist for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, said he pulled about 30 different species of fish in just 50 yards of McMahan Creek near Bellaire. At left, he examines a northern hogsucker fish he pulled from the creek.

Photos by Casey Junkins

this would depend on how much funding is available, as well as potential scheduling conflicts.

"It's nice now, but I hope it stays clean," Cera said.

