

• **The place to express, share opinions**

# VIEWPOINT

**Quotation for today**  
We're newspaper junkies. I can't imagine life without a newspaper.

Sally Quinn

**Thought for today**  
Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves those who speak what is right.

Proverbs 16:13

## It's time to build on Ward's block cleanup

The celebrities have left the building project. The television cameras are gone, the construction trailers have rolled away, the metal street barriers have disappeared and Clara Ward is settled in her new home at 650 E. 21st St.

Now that the block between Ash and Reed streets no longer serves as a set for ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," it's time to focus on what's next for neighborhood revitalization in Erie.

We can learn several lessons from the success of this project, in which a dilapidated homestead was demolished and rebuilt in just one week.

First, volunteers matter, and it helps to cast a wide net for them. This communitywide effort drew hundreds of people from faith-based groups, businesses and other organizations. Such partnerships are good not only for the short haul, but for long-term change.

Volunteers stayed on task despite the massive June 30 rainstorm. John Maleno, president of Maleno Real Estate Development, the company

that spearheaded construction, remained focused when a delivery truck lost its load of wall panels; he quickly ordered replacements from Rochester.

Thanks to the large volunteer contingent, the "Extreme Makeover" project didn't stop at Ward's house. For three days, 500 volunteers painted and repaired porches, removed trash, pulled weeds, fixed sidewalks and cleaned flower beds at 47 homes.

"The community cares about the whole neighborhood, not just Clara," says Aaron Lundberg, director of campus operations for Grace Church in McKean, which led the effort. "They just went to work like ants would," says Teresa Howard of 718 E. 21st St., whose yard received a landscaping makeover. "There's an army across the neighborhood, working."

Another lesson is that neighborhood transformation has to be more than cosmetic. The new Ward

house uses a geothermal heating and cooling system, which required six wells to be dug at a depth of 150 feet. Neighborhood change has to start at the grass roots, then cut just as deep.

Sue Moyer is executive director of the Bayfront East Side Taskforce, which works to improve housing and rehab in the neighborhood bounded by State, Wayne, East Sixth and Front streets. "You need to have the commitment from the people who live there to do the hard work and to keep the faith that things will get better. Sometimes that means making sure that your front yard looks good, that you maintain the lawn," Moyer says. "Eventually, you get to that tipping point where people realize it's not acceptable to throw the candy bar wrapper on the ground."

Maleno's company, ABC and hundreds of volunteers pitched in to accomplish an "Extreme Makeover." Thanks to Erie City Council, we also have a block that's been rechristened Clara's Way. Now we need the will to keep the momentum going for neighborhood revitalization.

## OUR VIEW

## Storm doesn't wreck weekend

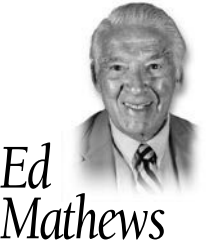
The weather forecast was right on target Saturday. When the storm hit this area, it was good and hard. The thunder lasted a long time, putting firefighters to work answering several calls. Sitting where we are at the corner of West 12th and Sassafras streets, we get to see the fire engines going in and out of the city's central station on a regular basis. Actually, the late afternoon on Saturday turned out to be nice, and Sunday was just as pleasant as it could be, much to everyone's delight. People were everywhere. It would be difficult to find a nicer day than Sunday. ... There is real concern among people with college students in their families. The cost of going to college these days has continued

to rise, and now with the state budget uncertain, it could be even more costly if some of the proposals of Gov. Ed Rendell become law. There will be pressure to cut that back. Right now, it does not seem that the budget will get settled anytime soon. It could change, but right now the Democrats and the Republicans do not look like they are very close. ... From what we have heard, travelers are cutting back on the length of their vacations. At first, it was the cost of gasoline that was a problem, but now it is the economy and the effort to keep vacations less expensive. That is important. There is no question it at least plays a role.

While the number of pleasure boats may not be as large as it has been the past few years, there are still plenty of boats out enjoying summer. Many boats are seen in driveways, not being taken out as much as they might have been in the past. Gas is still not cheap, but it is much better than it was a year ago. ... Despite the rain early on Saturday, the nice day that followed helped the annual Panegyri celebration be a big success. There were people attending until 9 p.m. Sunday. It is one of the big events of the summer and always draws a big crowd. Not only Greeks, but people from every other ethnic group enjoy themselves also. ... President Barack Obama returned to the United States early Sunday. He was a very busy president, visiting Russia, Italy and Ghana. Obama and his family were well-received. Obama was visibly shaken after visiting a West African castle from which traders once shipped slaves. The president will be facing some very tough problems of health care and energy, not to mention the economy, which is not improving. ... Two Marines were killed in Afghanistan this week. Unfortunately, the death figures are going to rise too quickly. There will be some very bloody fights involving the Marines. One thing we have to remember is that the people in that part of the world do not want the United States taking over their country. That was part of the problem in Iraq.

The annual Roar on the Shore is almost here. It begins Thursday. There seem to be more motorcyclists these days than we have seen in a long time. For the Roar on the Shore, thousands are expected, and many are here already. Rocker Bret Michaels will be here, as will custom bike builder Arlen Ness. Michaels has the hit TV show "Rock My World" and was the lead singer of Poison. There will be free entertainment every night. This is becoming one of the big events of the year. We are impressed by the people from all walks of life who are motorcyclists. They obviously enjoy biking. Gary G. Wetzel, who is one of the recipients of the Medal of Honor, will lead one of the event's rides on Saturday. ... The U.S. Women's Open had an exciting finish on Sunday when Eun-Hee Ji, of South Korea, made a 20-foot birdie putt on the 72nd hole to win. Candie Kung, born in Taiwan, finished second. ... Despite the Republican plans to give Supreme Court Justice nominee Sonia Sotomayor a hard time in questioning before the Senate starting today, no one doubts that she will be approved. She will be the first Hispanic on the court. That is a big reason why Sotomayor, daughter of Puerto Rican parents, will do well when she is questioned. The Puerto Rican vote in this country gets more important all the time. ... Democratic Sen. Al Franken, of Minnesota, has had only two weeks to prepare for the hearings but is expected to do OK.

**BORN ON THIS DATE:** John H. Horn, Eugene A. Galvin, James Trait, Timothy J. Everett, Earl Metzgar, Fred Weber Jr., Becky Bernhardt, Todd E. Morton, Amanda Diurba, Karen Pamula, Diane Kalicky, Leslie Ann Charters, Dave Duberow, Janet M. Richardson, Kerry Duncan, Cindy Mikovich, Elaine Leopold, Louis Lechtner, Bob Sender, Louise Hosie, Jean A. Silata, Don Rogers, Caroline Driscoll, Carol Ann Schwartz, Karen Dodson, Lucille Lomax, Florence Ullom, Rebecca Wroblewski, Andy McLaughlin, Carol Koenigsberg, Michael Finney, Jean Honard, Gladys R. Tompkins, Daniel P. Bedner, Ken Boggs, Debra Robbins, Lila Scott, Ron Oberlander Sr., David Foster, Dorothy Sharkey, Loreen Urquhart, Juanita Burdick, Greg Charkon, Jerry Myers, Allison Rilling, Todd Peterson, Brooke Barone, Janet Krugger, Joanne David, Julie Slomski, Marie Detar, Phil Krahe, Lisa Reske, Mark Schaaf, Emily Figurski, Teri Austin-Williams, Cynthia Ferritto, Frank Rekkitt.



Ed Mathews

## CHEERS & JEERS

Letters to the Editor

### Victim's bike in safekeeping at beauty school

I work at Toni & Guy at 930 Peach St. Recently, a young man was assaulted on 10th and State streets. Two of my students were near the scene and took the victim's bike, at a police officer's request. To this day, the bike sits in one of our empty classrooms. I called the police department's non-emergency line and told them about it because I figured the man might want his bike back.

Not only did the woman laugh, she sounded as if she would be doing me a favor by trying to locate the man. She said that if police came and got it, the bike would be tossed in a "basement with all the other things like it."

Did she mean citizen's personal property acquired after a person is assaulted? I was disgusted at the response.

If the assault victim reads this, your bike is safe at Toni & Guy. We'll return it when you come down and describe it. Apparently the police bureau's pledge to "protect and serve" is only when it's convenient for them. Good thing your local hairdressing school is looking out for you, right?

Jillian Swantek|Erie

### Kudos to Octane Graphics

The local TV networks failed to give much-deserved recognition to a fine Erie business during the recent dedication of motorcycles to the Erie Bureau of Police.

While Octane Graphics was mentioned by speakers during the ceremony, footage edited out the company name. Reporters only mentioned Harley Davidson and "a local graphics company."

Octane Graphics did a phenomenal job on short notice, and deserves its 15 minutes of fame.

Thank you, Octane Graphics, for a job well done. And thank you, Erie Times-News, for letting me get the word out.

K. Wygant|Erie

### Mission's Kovacs will be missed

I was very saddened to hear that Jack Kovacs is no longer affiliated with the Erie City Mission. I am sure there are many others that feel the same.

Back in the 1930s, my father turned the radio on every day at noon to 1400, WLEU, to listen to a broadcast from the City Mission. It was a religious 15 minutes and, to this day, the City Mission is a Christian organization.

I have supported the mission for many years and am hoping they will carry on with their good works. Kovacs was a guest at our church where he explained how the City Mission operated and how our money was spent. Yes, he will be sadly missed.

Howard E. Blystone|Wattsburg

### Excellent time found Under the Clock

I write this letter with much satisfaction. Too many times lately, we read about people complaining about their services. I write to praise service we received recently.

My son Stephen's graduation ceremony from East High School was held at the Warner Theatre on

June 3. We had relatives from New Jersey, Buffalo and Liverpool, Pa., at this joyous event.

Afterward I wanted all of us to attend a celebration dinner within walking distance. I chose Under The Clock restaurant. I had never been there and neither had our guests. I made reservations for 15. The place was beautiful and clean and the food was amazing. The outside patio was very nice as well; we took graduation pictures out there. Everyone complimented the place.

We were also impressed with our waiter, Jared. Very polite and patient, he answered all of our questions. Our order was put in and everything came out great. He kept up with the drinks and other requests. He had a great personality. When it came to bill time, he was very patient even though we had five different checks.

This perfect evening after a very joyous day made for a great celebration. If you haven't tried Under The Clock yet, you might want to go; I know I will be a returning customer there.

Galiene Rae|Erie

### Concert band worth the drive

I attended a performance on June 17 by the Concert Band of Northwest Pennsylvania on the Edinboro University campus. These concerts are usually held on the Louis C. Cole Auditorium lawn, but due to the inclement weather it was moved inside the auditorium. The performance was outstanding.

The "Music You Are Sure to Enjoy" concert included Sousa marches and music by many other composers, along with brief descriptions of the composer and the music to be played.

We have so many talented people in our area and it was disappointing

to see so few people in attendance. The concerts are free and there is ample parking available.

Aimee Rodak|Edinboro

### 'Pineapple Express' movie defended

I felt compelled to respond to the June 22 letter condemning the 2008 film "Pineapple Express" as "obscene and demented."

As a firm believer in a "whatever floats your boat" policy of tolerance, I am astonished that an R-rated comedy viewed by an adult operating under his own free will is grounds for such a public tirade. I am also curious about the source of the "false information" that persuaded the writer to watch "Pineapple Express." Entering "movie reviews" into Google.com returns 138 million results, any of which would no doubt have alerted the writer to the film's content.

The writer also asks, "When did illegal drugs become funny or entertaining?," as if Cheech and Chong or Woody Allen had never existed.

A search on the Internet Movie Database (IMDB.com) using "drugs" as a keyword results in 2,200 titles. One of the oldest movies, "Reuben in the Opium Joint," is described this way: "A hick tourist visits an opium den and has to be shown the proper way to smoke opium, after initially trying to use the pipe as if it were a flute." Made in 1905, this movie is listed as a comedy.

A 2008 Time magazine article, "Pot: Now Starring in Your Favorite Movie," sums up the "Pineapple Express" plot: "The cultural disconnect between marijuana (the illegal drug) and pot (that stuff that lots of regular people consume) is the comic fulcrum of Pineapple Express, in which a process server and his pot dealer

earn the ire of risibly bloodthirsty marijuana kingpins. Their escape is hampered, of course, by the fact that they're stoned..."

In the same article, producer Judd Apatow said: "Seth (Rogen, one of the film's stars) and I always argue whether or not this is an anti-pot movie. To me, it clearly is. Most of the film is people trying to murder these two guys, them trying not to get murdered, and it's all because they're smoking pot."

Had the writer watched the entire film, it is possible he would have grasped the paradox implied by Apatow and avoided the near apology he seems to have experienced instead. Better yet, two minutes' research and he could have avoided the film entirely.

Melanie Ditzel|Erie

### Lucky casino-goer gets wallet back

I would like to thank the person who found my wallet at Presque Isle Downs & Casino on June 15.

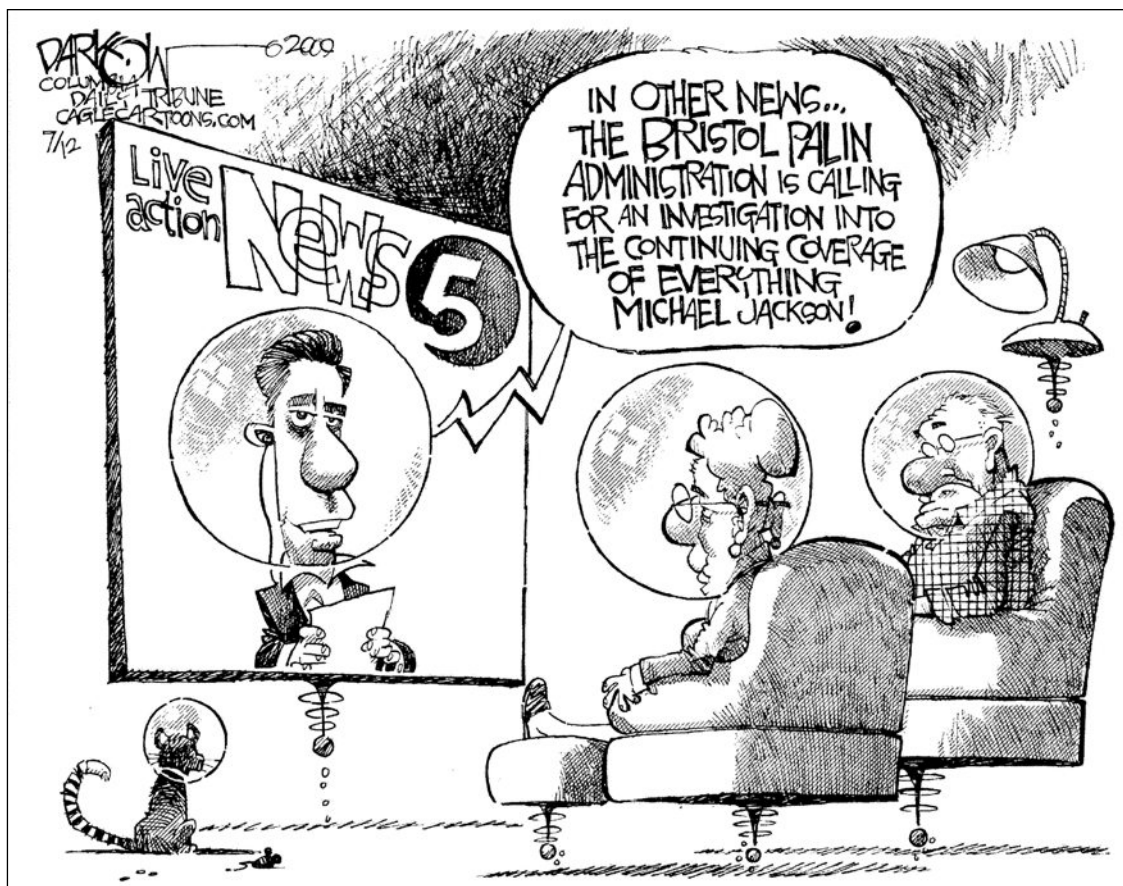
I was there with a friend and don't usually use or even take my wallet with me unless I am shopping, so when I won some money, I put it in my pocket. The next morning, the Lawrence Park police dispatcher called to tell me that the casino had found my wallet. I wouldn't have missed it until I went shopping a few days later.

I called the casino and was reassured that my wallet was in a safe place, and that all my cards and "mad money" were intact.

I retrieved my wallet from the casino on June 21 and everything was indeed in place. With all the not-so-good things going on these days, I consider myself very fortunate, and am glad to know that there are still many good people around who believe in doing the right thing. So a special thanks to the decent, honorable person who turned it in, to the two security gentlemen who helped us at around noon on June 21 and to the security gentleman named Jerry, who was very reassuring over the phone and didn't want to accept a tip. Also, thanks to the police dispatcher for his call.

I believe in paying it forward and will continue to do so.

Lynda Leech|Erie



### Have your say

Want to praise that good Samaritan? To salute, criticize, nag or boost an institution, public official, community representative or the Erie Times-News itself?

Our "Cheers and Jeers" feature gives you the opportunity. Submissions may appear in print or online.

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**Regular mail:** Letters to the editor, Erie Times-News, 205 W. 12th St., Erie, PA 16534

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