

The Extension



WRIGHT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Fall 2020 Issue 104

President's Message: Larry Prochaska

The pandemic has given us time to focus. It has also allowed us to see our unique fragility as human beings old enough to be retired. In addition, the George Floyd case shocked our imagined and/or assumed foundations of our country to the core. Where do we stand as human beings, Ohioans, and Americans?



Our university continues to experience financial hardship that is self-inflicted as well as tied to Ohio's declining population of college-aged students and financial support from the state. When the university was founded, it was modeled as a low tuition option for place-bound, first-generation college students. As the university expanded its degree programs into graduate and professional schools, tuition remained low, well below the state average for other comprehensive universities in Ohio. As a result, during lean state budget years, the university never caught up financially to tuition levels of other state universities. In addition, the state subsidy per enrolled full-time student declined from 41% in 1999 to 20% currently. Finally, the administration's sometimes unwise decisions and misplaced priorities added to the problem. These factors contributed to the financial crisis the university currently faces, one that the Board of Trustees and the state government must tackle.

From the beginning, the university worked to serve its targeted minority communities in the Dayton area and then evolved to support more diversity and inclusion, including training for students, staff, and faculty in the 1990s. For example, I attended diversity training in 1997 and the College of Science and Math appointed me as diversity liaison from 2008–2015. The deans and the upper level administration financially supported and encouraged this type of training and established appropriate infrastructure to ensure good outcomes. In short, the university recognized its obligation to serve all Ohioans.

I believe that as an institution we have failed the populace of the state of Ohio by not communicating effectively the rationale for societal norms. The idea that a basic public health measure like wearing a mask to stop an epidemic is an act of political affiliation is shocking beyond imagination. Similarly, the belief that vaccinations are a dangerous government-driven conspiracy is just plain scary. As a biomedical scientist, I have come to believe that I should have spent more time talking about public health and basic science rather than focusing mostly on my research career. University professors are often considered elitist, and we have done little to diffuse that argument.

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President's Message (Cont.)

With regards to ourselves, we seem to have lost our way in terms of common civility. We allow political differences to divide us into enemy camps. It is disturbing that planning for our common future on the planet is sometimes considered un-American. I received my PhD from Ohio State and came back to work in Ohio because I thought people here were hardworking, supported public education and were a proud, fair-minded people. In my heart, I still believe this is true. In that spirit, I ask you to support our university, faculty, staff, students and the administration in whatever mechanism you choose. This good university and its proud history should not be allowed to wither away into oblivion.

From the Right

"Property and capital are not soulless abstractions, easily replaced by an insurance payout, as the rioters and their apologists maintain. . . . Capital is accumulated effort and innovation, the sum of human achievement and imagination. Its creation is the aim of civilization. But civilization is everywhere and at all times vulnerable to the darkest human impulses. Government exists to reign in those impulses so that individual initiative can flourish. America's Founders, schooled in a profound philosophical and literary tradition dating back to classical antiquity, understood the fragility of civil peace and the danger of the lustful, vengeful mob."

This astonishing paragraph was adapted from a lecture Heather Mac Donald delivered at an online symposium, "The Coronavirus and Public Policy," held by Hillsdale College in Michigan on June 18, 2020. Hillsdale, a conservative liberal arts college, upholds its Christian heritage though it is no longer affiliated with the Baptists who founded it in 1844. Hillsdale accepts no federal or state aid, because of disputes about Title IX and other reporting requirements.

Heather Mac Donald is a Fellow at the Manhattan Institute. Her credentials are sterling: a Yale B.A., an M.A. in English from Cambridge, a J.D. from Stanford Law. She writes for multiple newspapers and periodicals, including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Mac Donald has published several well-received books. She is an atheist who describes herself as a "secular conservative."

James E. Sayer Tribute

September 11, 1946–July 12, 2020

It is hard to summarize Jim Sayer's myriad contributions to Wright State University. He came up through the ranks as a faculty member. He was a popular and effective teacher in both large lectures and small seminars. His scholarly interests were wide ranging, from American history and politics to more esoteric topics in rhetoric. He usually found a way to accommodate almost any favor asked of him. If you needed a guest speaker, Jim could always deliver, often on short notice. He was friendly, open, and devoid of snobbishness about rank or position. He was an effective department chair and an innovative and successful dean of the Lake Campus, increasing enrollment from 730 to 1,500 during his tenure.



He served as president of the faculty a record seven times. He liked the nitty gritty of university politics and enjoyed sparing with every president from Kegerreis to Hopkins. One of his proudest accomplishments was persuading President Kegerreis to pickup the STRS pick-up, which effectively gave the faculty a \$5,000 raise. He represented the faculty in good times and during retrenchments and unionization. He had been elected to an eighth term but withdrew to become dean. It is clear that the faculty who elected him time and again trusted and valued his leadership.

In retirement, Jim continued to teach an Honors Seminar each fall term and he got involved in the Retirees Association. He served a three-year term as president-elect, president, and past-president. Jim was the most effective president ever in terms of getting through the agenda in an efficient and timely manner. He was also successful in securing a modest but much needed budget enhancement for WSURA. When he and Cathy decided to move to Washington state, we wished them well but were sad to see such valued colleagues and friends leave the area.

Our heartfelt condolences to Cathy and their four children, Bob, Laura, Annie, and Steven.

To learn more about Jim's time at Wright State, check out his interview on WSURA's oral history site, https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/archives_retirees/33/

Oh You Woman of Appalachia

how they work to keep you down,
call you fat, shoeless,
say you have no teeth.

But you got teeth, plenty.
Ask any city man thinking to park
his fracking machines in your valley.
And the earth responds,
rewards you in petals,
herbs, sweet potato vines.

And yes we know, one good fiddle lick
makes you forget tired or hungry,
and yes that is your voice
strong and true, front row of the choir
come Sunday morning, slipping
more than you ought in the donation box,
because you cannot bear to think
of any of your neighbors going without.

Generation to generation,
childhood to womanhood,
failing crops and dying children,
the mine siren's doom.
Your sorrows like echoes
rippling through the holler
and entered with careful cursive
in the family Bible.

So when they call you soft, I say,
You are not soft.
You are limestone.
You are flint.
You are mountain shine,
feed-sack proud.
You are diamond.

Artist's Corner

Ohio Has a New Poet Laureate

In June Governor Mike DeWine appointed a new poet laureate for Ohio, **Kari Gunter-Seymour**, a retired instructor from the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University. She believes poetry is even more important now that we are in the midst of so much turmoil and pain. "When we write our truths, we bring things to light and create understanding. And from there we grow and find our way through these things that are so difficult for us right now," she says.



Gunter-Seymour previously served as poet laureate of Athens and is also a talented photographer. She is the founder and curator of the Women of Appalachia Project, which seeks to showcase the art and literature of the region. Her family is deeply rooted in the region—she is a ninth generation Appalachian. Her most recent book is *A Place So Deep Inside America It Can't Be Seen*.

Bethal Ridge Cemetery

On the edge that time thins, I stood
with aching arms, in a wrinkled dress.
Among the stones a holier-than-thou,
dark-robed and flailing,
recited psalms by the shovelful.

It's the body that feels pain,
but the brain delivers it.
To this day, sometimes driving
I see black wings flapping between
bare branches and overreact.

Someone once told me we make
everyone in our dreams into another
version of ourselves, that rage isn't rage
but sorrow turned back on itself,
the shape made of regret.

There must have been birds,
the noon-time smell of grass.
I can't say. Feathered arias
and earthy balms are not meant for
a woman with a fist in each pocket.

Did Mike DeWine's Yellow Springs Roots Make Him a Better Governor?

The onset of the Covid-19 crisis gave Governor DeWine an opportunity to shine in the national spotlight. He was regularly praised by members of the national press corps for his decisive early actions in response to the pandemic. He was seen as a sane, sensible Republican by even the most liberal Democrats. His approval ratings for handling the crisis soared to more than 85%.

Like another Catholic governor, Democrat Andrew Cuomo, he seemed to have a grasp of the big picture. They both put the preservation of human life first. Neither of them has a problem with science and both relied heavily on their chief public health advisors. Neither had any problem exercising all the authority they could legitimately claim.



For a brief moment the crisis appeared to be winding down. Once the states began the reopening process, DeWine and Cuomo went back to their respective political corners. Recent decisions, on whether masks should be mandatory for example, have exposed their basic differences and loyalties. Governor DeWine is no longer such a media darling, but his approval ratings have remained at historic heights.

By mid-July Ohio was experiencing a spike in new cases and struggling to keep up with testing. The governor seems to be between a rock and a hard place. If he implements the recommendations of public health experts, he risks enraging the right wing of his party. But in spite of it all, most Ohioans are willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. How did he become so adept at balancing competing interests?



Mike DeWine was born in Springfield, Ohio, but he grew up on North Winter Street in Yellow Springs. His parents owned a seed company, where Mike acquired a strong work ethic as a boy. His family worshipped at St. Paul Catholic Church, and he attended the new Mills Lawn Elementary School, along with another first-grader who would one day become his wife, Fran

Struewing. They started dating in high school, going bowling or to the Little Art Theatre. They graduated in 1965 and both decided to attend Miami University.

They married while still undergraduates, and eventually had eight children together. Their third child, Becky, died on August 4, 1993, in a car accident when she was 22 years old, shortly after her graduation from the College of Wooster. Pat DeWine, their oldest son, is an Ohio Supreme Court justice. Their daughter Alice lost the Republican primary this spring to be the Greene County prosecutor; she remains on the staff as an assistant. Mike and Fran are still clearly devoted to each other after more than 50 years of marriage. The governor doesn't talk for very long without mentioning Fran. The interviews he does on "Morning Joe" and other TV news programs are filmed from the historic home they have shared in Cedarville since 1974. The house was built in 1823 by the famous Civil War journalist, Whitelaw Reid. Every summer they host an ice cream social on the grounds, and Fran, family, and friends make hundreds of pies to serve at the always well-attended event. She is an active campaigner, an avid cookbook author, and an enthusiastic grandmother to her 24 grandchildren, but she doesn't often speak publicly about policy.

Yellow Springs, home of Antioch College, is usually considered the liberal bastion in conservative Greene County. But there was always a vocal conservative minority, including Mike DeWine's parents. They often talked politics at the dinner table. As things heated up in the 60s, Mike's mother, Jean, was invited to write a weekly column called "A View from the Right" for the local newspaper. She focused mostly on national issues, many of which were reflected in daily life in Yellow Springs.



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Mike Dewine (Cont.)

The most notorious battle started in 1964 when Mike was still in high school. Paul Graham, an African American villager, visited the barbershop on Xenia Avenue and asked to get his hair cut. Lewis Gegner, the barber, declined on the grounds of not knowing how to cut a black person's hair. Before the controversy was over, it drew national attention, and at one point more than 100 people were arrested and jailed when picketers and police collided. Anti-Vietnam War protests and sing-alongs on the steps of the Antioch Student Union were routine.

It's clear that Mike DeWine embraced the conservative views of his family. Nobody would think to call him a moderate Republican; he leans right even in more conservative circles. But that doesn't mean he didn't learn a thing or two growing up in Yellow Springs. He has said the village was formative in cultivating his appreciation for free speech and diverse viewpoints. He seems comfortable around people of all races, faiths, and worldviews. He doesn't carry Yellow Springs when he runs for election, but people there seem proud to call the governor a native son.

Mike was elected Greene County prosecutor when he was 29. He has been a state senator, a U.S. representative, a lieutenant governor, a U.S. senator, and attorney general of Ohio. He lost two senate races, one to John Glenn and the other to Sherrod Brown. After 42 years in elective office, DeWine became governor. He hasn't had the administration he expected, but he has risen to the task in front of him. People like to say Ohio is safely red, but it is good to remember that both Clinton and Obama carried Ohio twice. And we continue to reelect one of the most liberal members of the Senate, Sherrod Brown. That anti-choice, anti-union, pro-Trump Mike DeWine is so popular with so many Ohio Democrats is a testament to the basic goodness of his soul and the strength of his character.

Mary Kenton

T-Ball Highlights from Jimmy Chesire

For 35 years I have coached the Yellow Springs T-ball program. I wrote columns in the *Yellow Springs News* about our weekly T-ball sessions. But this year because of the pandemic, the T-ball season and any columns I would have written, have been cancelled. I miss the kids, I miss our Friday night games, and I miss the stories I could have written about these amazing children, like these from my past columns.

Maggie and Jimmy from the Yellow Springs News, June 19, 2015

Maggie Bullock stands at the home plate in front of the tee. She says, "Dog dog, deer, dog dog." I lean forward and lower my head so I am looking her in the eyes:

"Dog dog what?" I ask. She lifts her head, her bouncy, naturally and tightly coiled curls swaying and springing. They're like a crown for some magical mystery queen. "Dog what?" I repeat and she takes a step toward me and says with considerable force and fiery-eyed indignation, "I'm four!" Four? "Four! Four-and-a-half! Four!" she insists. I have no idea how I had affronted her—"I'm four, you idiot," she seemed to be saying—but she forgives me immediately. I trot down to first base with her. I ask her to tell her father, Ben Bullock, our first base coach and one of the most loving people on a field full of loving people. "Tell your dad what you told me," I suggest to Maggie. She does. Ben listens, nods, then tells me she saw dog prints and deer prints, nodding to a set of dog prints right next to the base right there at our feet.



"I don't know how to play," Matthew Drummond, 3, says as he comes to the plate.

"None of us do," I say, which is why we try to have an adult (or older sibling) at every base. A child hits the ball. We say, "Drop the bat and run to first!" and the mysteries unfold: most of the children do not "drop the bat." They stand staring at the ball they've just hit that has stirred up this hornet's nest of wild child scrambling. We say it five, six, seven times, usually needing to physically touch the bat, gently pushing it down toward the ground. Sometimes we even need to peel the kid's fingers back: "Let go. Drop the bat. Drop the bat."

So when we say, "run to first," we may as well be speaking Cantonese.

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T-Ball Highlights (Cont.)

The colorful mosaic that is the Perry League continues to startle, astound, and delight. Our tiniest children spontaneously bring me lovely little bouquets of flowers—such as 2-and-a-half-year old Madelin Maguire handing me a clutch of clover, maybe six or seven flowers all told, while her sidekick Jane Croshier, 4, offered up a fatter, 25-30 flower bunch. And they walk up to me in the middle of the action.

“Here,” Madelin Maguire says offering me her kiss of clover. “Here,” Jane Croshier says lifting her fat generous bouquet up to me.

And my heart melts: a burst of fresh, just-picked flowers from a pair of angels of T-ball!

Two-year-old Kian Rainey has been one of those marvels that keeps me coming back to this program year after year. A beautiful boy, as lovely as an angel’s dream, as delightful as the first beam of sun in the morning, he loves this game, managing to get here, thank you, mother Amy Boblitt, every single Friday night. When he came to the plate his third time at bat he wanted the tee higher. It’s a hollow black rubber tube with a smaller, also hollow, black rubber tube pushed down into it. This inner hollow tube can be pulled up or pushed down so a child has the option of hitting the ball at a height ranging anywhere from 24 to 36 inches.

Kian, who is about 34 inches tall, steps up to the tee. His grin is so warm, so passionate, you just want to hug him—for yourself, for the love that moves through you, a love triggered by his joy and abandon, his complete surrender to the perfection of this moment. He says, “Wann-it eye-er.” What? I say. “Wann-it EYE-er,” he says, emphasizing the first syllable of that second pair of sounds. “Oh!” I say, getting it, “you want it higher?”

“Yes,” he says, directing that love light of his on me now, he’s grateful I have understood. “Yes. Wann-it eye-er.”

I raise it. “Eye-er,” he says. I raise it again: “Okay?” He says nothing. “Higher?” I say, thinking that is what his silence means. I pull the tee to its full 36-inch height. His eyes sparkle and flash, his smile widens and deepens simultaneously. Clearly he is pleased. “Yes!” he says.

And that’s a slice of the T-ball life I will be denied this pandemic 2020 summer. But God willing, we’ll be out there and at it again next summer. Ready and raring to go.

Jimmy Chesire taught composition and creative writing until his retirement in 2016 with 22 years of service. He has published a novel, a collection of essays and several poems and hopes to publish his second novel this December.

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A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

On March 12, I heard on the radio that Governor DeWine had closed all public schools in Ohio until some time in April. I understood then that the world had changed. Like most retired folks, I've spent almost all of my time at home this spring. The man who helps with our yard had extra time on his hands too, and, as a result, our yard has never looked better. Our neighbors do their part too. Many days I've stood at my kitchen window and looked out at every verdant, blooming thing and reflected on the unnerving contrast between the horrifying, ugly daily accounting of death and my beautiful neighborhood.

Then towards the end of May, George Floyd was killed while in the custody of four Minneapolis police officers. Witnesses videotaped the entire sequence of events, and Mr. Floyd's agonizing death was played over and over on television. It shocked the nation and the world. Massive demonstrations, some with violence and looting, followed, not only in the United States but around the globe. Now, weeks later as I write, the demonstrations are mostly peaceful. Mr. Floyd has been buried in Houston beside the mama he so piteously called for as his last breaths were being squeezed out of him, and we've moved on to Congressional hearings and discussions of re-structuring policing. We understand that the world has changed again.



It is in this context that I happened to watch the 2019 film starring Tom Hanks, *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*. I didn't know much about Fred Rogers; I had never watched his TV program or thought he was interesting enough to investigate. But the movie was supposed to be good—Oscar nominations and all. It took a while to accept the supporting cast in their movie roles—Matthew Rhys, one of *The Americans*, played the hard-nosed *Esquire* journalist, Lloyd Vogel, and his wife in the movie, Andrea, is played by none other than Susan Kelechi Watson, Beth Pearson on *This Is Us*. Tom Hanks had me from the beginning. He was mesmerizing as Fred Rogers.

The plot of the movie is based on an *Esquire* cover story that started out as an assignment for a 400-word fluff piece on Fred Rogers and the relationship that the two men develop. Before it is over Fred Rogers has met Lloyd's whole dysfunctional family, and brokered a peace between Lloyd and his dying, alcoholic father who 20 years before had abandoned Lloyd and his sister while their mother lay dying of cancer. In the end Lloyd gets a restored marriage, becomes a better father to his infant son, and enjoys what remains of his extended family. It sounds a little saccharine, but Director Marielle Heller, a good script, and an outstanding cast keep it real.

The most famous scene takes place in a Chinese restaurant when Fred says to Lloyd, "We'll just take a minute and think about all the people who loved us into being." Lloyd says he can't do that, but Fred urges him to try. "Take a minute. They will come to you," he says. By extension, anyone watching is invited to participate. I closed my eyes and the names and images rushed in and kept coming. I was surprised by how quickly the minute was over. I was surprised by some of the people who came into mind. Later I reflected on how my list might be different if I had to list the people I have loved, rather than those who have loved me. Watch the movie, participate in the meditation, enjoy a pretty awesome, mind's eye-opening experience. You may or may not decide to share the results.



Mary Kenton



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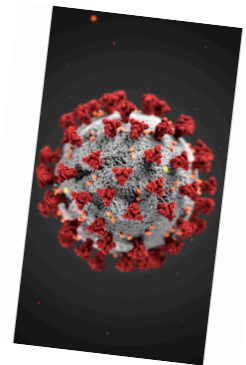
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Covid-19 Changes

Perhaps, dear reader, you may have noticed that WSURA along with the rest of the world has had to adapt to the whims of a virus. We were unable to mail a spring issue of this newsletter because of budget cuts and the temporary closure of Printing Services. Likewise, we cancelled our annual election, faculty and staff awards, luncheon, picnic, and several other planned events.



Elected officers for the 2019–2020 year will continue in their duties for another year, and we, like all of you, hope for a new normal in the near future.

But do look for announcements of virtual events coming soon!