

# Distracted driving kills

Fellow residents of Erie County: As the weather warms up, you can expect our highways to be full of families on their way to and from their spring and summer activities. April ushers in Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

While there is some positive news to share regarding trends, it is important that we continue our work across this community and nation to eliminate distracted driving.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the number of people killed in crashes involving distracted driving decreased more than 6% in 2022. While this is encouraging, the data still shows that 3,308 people across this country needlessly lost their lives. For these families, it doesn't matter that the statistics are decreasing. All they know is that there is an empty chair at the dinner table.

Nearly 10% of all crashes the Erie County Sheriff's Office investigated in 2023 were caused by

distracted driving or driver inattention. This includes the use of a cell phone, GPS and vehicle infotainment systems. This is something that is so easily preventable. No text message is worth the life that it might cost. No phone call is worth the weeks or months that might be spent in the hospital.

You will be hearing much more about this issue later this month. The Erie County Sheriff's Office and our partners in law enforcement will be highlighting the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee's "No Empty Chair" campaign. During the week of April 22nd, we will be drawing attention to various highway safety initiatives. There will be accompanying enforcement details each day, including one focused on cellphone use and texting on April 24. Other enforcement ef-

orts will include speeding in school zones, seat belt and child restraints, passing stopped school buses and underage impaired driving.

The timing of this initiative is not coincidental. As prom and graduation season approaches, we are also nearing the 100 deadliest days for teen drivers. This represents the period between Memorial and Labor Days during which there is an increase in motor vehicle fatalities involving teen drivers. I urge parents to speak with their children about being safe behind the wheel, with a particular focus on distracted driving. Remember, they see your behavior while you are driving and will likely follow suit.

I want you to know that law enforcement and traffic safety agencies across Erie County, New York state and the nation are committed to this issue.



**John Garcia**

**ERIE COUNTY SHERIFF**

# Remembering fields, woods and streams on Earth Day

One of the issues that came forward in our conversations with Clarence residents during the last election is a common concern for the environment. Many of these conversations revolved around over-development as a threat to the character and functioning of our town. Land use is just one component of keeping our environment safe and healthy, but it is the most direct tool local governments have in protecting the environment from habitat loss, pollution and global warming.

Many of us can recall a childhood with fields and woods to roam and explore; some of my fondest days as a child were spent playing in the woods behind my family home on Kraus Road. We remember how accessible land was for hunting, bird watching, hiking, and snowmobiling. Sadly, the low priority on preservation by the town board continually diminishes these opportunities for Clarence residents. With Earth Day approaching on April 22, it is a good time to reflect more broadly on our relationship with our environment and on what steps we can take to ensure that we are good stewards of the town we leave to our children and grandchildren.

We are fortunate in Clarence to have an award-winning and effective program already in place to protect land that is ecologically, agriculturally and recreationally significant from development. Established in 2002, the Greenprint program has preserved nearly 2,000 acres of land in Clarence in partnership with the Western New York Land Conservancy. This is done by either purchasing the land or the development rights by placing the properties in a conservation easement. Unfortunately, the program has fizzled out in recent years as funds dried up and the committee responsible for identifying land did not replace departing members.

Town officials continued to neglect the program in favor of other public works initiatives until Democrats pushed the issue last election cycle. Those up for reelection shifted their tone towards supporting the program, agreeing to create a new committee to revitalize the Greenprint program. Now, post-election, the community must hold the town board to their word. Make sure your elected

officials know that maintaining a healthy ecosystem in Clarence is important to you.

Collaboration is the only way to navigate the competing interests of land-use. We must bring people across the political spectrum together. In a show of faith and confidence, the Clarence Democratic Committee has endorsed Judge Michael Powers in the upcoming election for town judge. Judge Powers was instrumental in the creation of the Greenprint program and continues to work toward its revitalization. We feel that his active role in providing stewardship of Clarence's resources as well as the establishment of the highly successful drug court has been an invaluable service to our community.

The Clarence Democratic Committee celebrates people, programs and projects that serve the common good of the Clarence community. Please join us for our next meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 1, in the Clarence Center American Legion Hall to learn how you can support a better future for Clarence.



**Alexander Maccallini**

**CLARENCE DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE MEMBER**



## Heard

Call 716-632-0390 and express your opinion.

✓ I'm calling regarding Supervisor Casilio taking all the credit for giving the volunteer firefighters a property discount on their taxes, yet he reassesses everyone. So

basically, you get nothing, and he's a fireman himself. Shame on you, supervisor.

✓ Several months ago, I sent a Bee Heard about the condition of the clock

tower on the Clarence High School. Now when I drive by, it looks fantastic. You did a great job. I just wanted to follow up and say how much I appreciate it and that it looks so much better. Great job!

✓ I'm calling about the person who wanted to send the Kensington Expressway \$1 million to Baltimore. One, I think the ship should have had insurance, which should take care of the claim, or two, that the country that owns this ship maybe should pay for the bridge. And then three, if he's so concerned, maybe he should send a personal check for the bridge. I don't think the taxpayers should be on the line for a ship's mistake, that's why they have insurance.

*(Editor's note: Call 716-632-0390 to leave an anonymous one-minute Bee Heard comment. Callers may leave one comment per week, and the Bee will not publish comments substantially longer than one minute or containing derogatory or insulting comments. All comments are subject to editing. The Bee Heard submission deadline is 5 p.m. Thursdays.)*

## Diocese of Buffalo names director of Buffalo Catholic Cemeteries

Thomas Christy was recently named director of the Buffalo Catholic Cemeteries by the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo.

Christy began his career working in Albany for the speaker of the New York State Assembly, which included time serving as legislative director for former State Assemblyman William Parment of Jamestown. He has served in financial leadership positions with the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center, D'Youville University, Federal Express and the Erie County Clerk's Office, and he also founded and operated Advance Image Marketing, worked for 10 years as a television and radio host, and wrote for news publications in Niagara County.

Christy received his bachelor's degree in economics from Buffalo State College and his master of business administration degree from the University at Buffalo. He has done graduate work in the international business program at D'Youville University. He is also a graduate of Cardinal O'Hara High School and St. Amelia School in the Town of Tonawanda.



**Christy**

### Share your news

If you have news about upcoming events or new businesses in Clarence or Akron, or know of community leaders who could be profiled,

feel free to email estoll@beenews.com or contact Emily Stoll by mail at 5564 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14221-5410.

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