

# THE BUFFALO NEWS OPINION

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## EDITORIAL



BUFFALO NEWS FILE PHOTO

**NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell embraces Pastor James Giles from Back to Basics Outreach Ministry. Back to Basics is one of the groups receiving a grant from Health Foundation of Western and Central New York's Imagine Nonviolence program.**

## Good investments

*Kudos for a new state forest, violence prevention and winter prep assistance*

### Three cheers for a new forest

Soon there will be a new, public place to enjoy the great outdoors. The long-closed Bluemont Ski Resort in Yorkshire, Cattaraugus County, will be used to create Blue Hill State Forest. According to the Department of Environmental Conservation, 1,200 acres of the former ski resort will become Western New York's first new state forest in more than 60 years.

The property includes two 800-foot peaks, forests, ponds, fields and access to Cattaraugus Creek. As reported in The Buffalo News, the DEC said the property was purchased from Kingbrook Funding LLC for \$2.1 million through the state's Environmental Protection Fund. The ski resort operated until 1979.

Preservation of this open space is not just good for the environment, it's an outdoor space that all can enjoy.

### Investing in safer communities

Across our city and region, groups big and small are working to prevent violence. And now, the Health Foundation of Western and Central New York will give more than a dozen of those groups a financial hand.

Fifteen groups in the Buffalo Niagara and Syracuse regions were awarded grants as part of the foundation's Imagine Nonviolence program, according to a Buffalo News report. The program funds initiatives focused on anti-violence efforts including the reduction of gun violence. Western New York grant participants include: \$4,000 for

Most Valuable Parents; \$5,000 for VOICE Buffalo; \$5,000 for P.E.A.C.E., Inc.; \$5,000 for Back to Basics Outreach Ministries; \$5,000 for the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Erie County; \$5,000 for the ECMC Foundation; \$13,915 for Allegany County Community Opportunities and Rural Development; \$14,850 for the Erie Niagara Area Health Education Center; \$14,960 for the Healthy Community Alliance; and \$14,850 for Hearts and Hands.

Grassroots organizations are an important piece of the puzzle in anti-violence efforts, as are grants to fund these programs.

### Winter is coming

Well, winter is on the way – whether we like it or not.

To help residents get ready for the snow, the Buffalo Common Council will hold its second Winter Preparedness Series Oct. 21 to Nov. 15. The programs will be held at nine locations, one in each Council district.

During the free event, residents will learn how to protect their homes, families and neighborhoods in the event of a major winter storm. Information on local shelters, food resources and warming centers will be provided and attendees can sign up for support and assistance programs.

A winter preparedness kit will be provided to attendees, and it might come in handy. Last year's kits contained totes, winter gloves and/or neck warmers, a can opener, flashlight and batteries, emergency blankets, a first-aid kit, matches, handwarmers, complimentary Covid tests and candles.

Space is limited, and registering early is recommended. To register, go to [buffalony.gov/1746/Winter-Preparedness-Series-2024](http://buffalony.gov/1746/Winter-Preparedness-Series-2024) or call 716-851-5105. Be prepared.

## MY VIEW

### Don't worry about fashion police

The well-dressed woman buying stamps at the post office wore a silver ankle bracelet. I guessed her age to be about 80. As I waited my turn in line, I eyed her anklet, appreciating her stylish ensemble, and chastised myself for feeling I was too old to wear a similar piece of jewelry.

Funny, as I grow older, I seem to place new limits on what I can and cannot wear. Large, colorful earrings, for instance, I long felt were off bounds for someone my age. Flashy earrings should only be worn by younger women, I thought – that is until I met a stylish woman who was clearly older than me who rocked earrings of all shapes and colors. They looked fantastic on her and made me feel foolish for restricting myself. If she could wear them, why couldn't I?

Bold, stylish earrings soon became part of my everyday wardrobe. I receive compliments on my earrings all the time and feel good about my appearance with baubles dangling from my ears; but an ankle bracelet was something different, at least in my eyes. Although the small accessory is subtle, I always thought anklets were kind of sexy and meant for a younger crowd.

After seeing the woman in the post office, I did a little research. Surprisingly, I learned that anklets are some of the oldest known pieces of jewelry. They've been around for over 8,000 years! I wonder if women years ago put as much thought into wearing an anklet as I was putting into it today.

Still, as much as I loved wearing anklets in my younger days, I didn't feel they were appropriate now that wrinkles and gray hair had become more prominent in the reflection in my mirror.

Yet, on this particular day as I waited in line to purchase



Linda O'Connor isn't going to assign age limits to jewelry choices.

stamps at my local post office and notice a woman clearly older than me wearing an ankle bracelet, the only thing I thought was, "wow, she looks so put together and stylish." Clearly, I need to reconsider the restrictions I place upon myself.

Wearing an ankle bracelet or large, colorful earrings for that matter, may sound like small feats, yet I had denied myself the enjoyment of donning these accessories because I feared committing some kind of fashion faux pas.

Are there really any hard and fast rules for wearing ankle bracelets or earrings? Are there fashion police who would gasp upon seeing a 60+ woman wearing flashy accessories? Would others frown upon the sight?

As I pondered these questions, I came to realize that age should not limit our wardrobe choices because we fear what others may think. If it makes us feel good, why not go for it? There is no playbook on what to wear at various life stages.

As the old saying goes, "age is just a number." I feel silly for having denied myself the simple pleasure of wearing fun jewelry simply because of the age reflected by my birth certificate. That's just dumb.

I left the post office that morning determined to purchase a new ankle bracelet and wear it proudly along with my oversize, loud earrings. Making a statement? You betcha! I'm saying that this is my life and there are no limits to what I can do or wear.

It may sound cliché, but you are as old as you feel and right now, I feel like wearing an ankle bracelet.

**My View** is a first-person column open to all Western New Yorkers. If your article is selected for publication, a photo of you is required. Email submissions to [editpage@buffnews.com](mailto:editpage@buffnews.com).

## ANOTHER VOICE | CONSERVATION

### Zoar's old forests crucial for rare birds

JAY G. WOPPERER

I remember as a young boy climbing the elm trees in our front yard at home; the trees became good friends. After Dutch Elm disease killed all the trees on my street, my appreciation for trees and the wildlife that depend on them grew stronger.

Many of us were blindsided when it was discovered that the state Department of Environmental Conservation has a proposed collaboration with Audubon NY/Connecticut on a bird habitat management project at the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area. The plan involves the cutting of approximately 92 acres of mature trees,

mostly black walnut and cherry.

I visited the 92 acres on Wickham Road in North Otto. What I found was a majestic forest of approximately 100-year-old trees with red X marks painted on most of them. I walked through the forest and imagined what it would be like if only a few trees were standing; it was mind-numbing.

Rare birds – migratory warblers – have been seen and heard in this forest by expert birders. The environment the trees and their canopy create is ideal for most birds. In previous statements, Audubon and the DEC have stated that the black-throated blue warbler is in danger and their plan to cut trees

will provide them habitat to survive. According to the state's bird breeding atlas, the black-throated blue warbler requires large, dense tree canopies for survival.

These strong, mature trees contain the DNA of trees that have survived severe weather events and invasion by parasites for many years. Their DNA is needed to plant the seeds of future trees that will also grow old, strong and healthy. Clear-cutting forests opens the cut area to invasive insects and plants which destroys the indigenous environment.

Mature forests create an ecosystem that moderates extremes of heat and cold, stores water, se-

questers carbon and harmful particulates from the air we breathe and releases oxygen. All this mitigates climate change which is the basis for a visionary state initiative to plant 25 million trees by 2033. Why cut this healthy, mature existing forest while planting new trees elsewhere? Now is the time to tell our state representatives to add the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area to the state natural and historic preserve trusts to be preserved forever.

Jay G. Wopperer is a member, national and Buffalo Audubon Societies and has led many nature and birding walks.

## Editorial Board

The editorials on this page represent the opinion of The Buffalo News editorial board. Members are Publisher Tom Wiley; Executive Editor Sheila Rayam; and editorial writers Dawn Marie Bracely and Elizabeth Licata.

**Another Voice** is an issues-oriented column that appears on the editorial page each day. Writers must have some background or expertise on the topic about which they are writing. Submissions should be about 480 words. Email submissions to [editpage@buffnews.com](mailto:editpage@buffnews.com).